

The Girl Scouts of the Round Table

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THE GIRL SCOUTS SERIES

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the Round Table**

BOOKS BY MARGARET VANDERCOOK

THE RANCH GIRLS SERIES

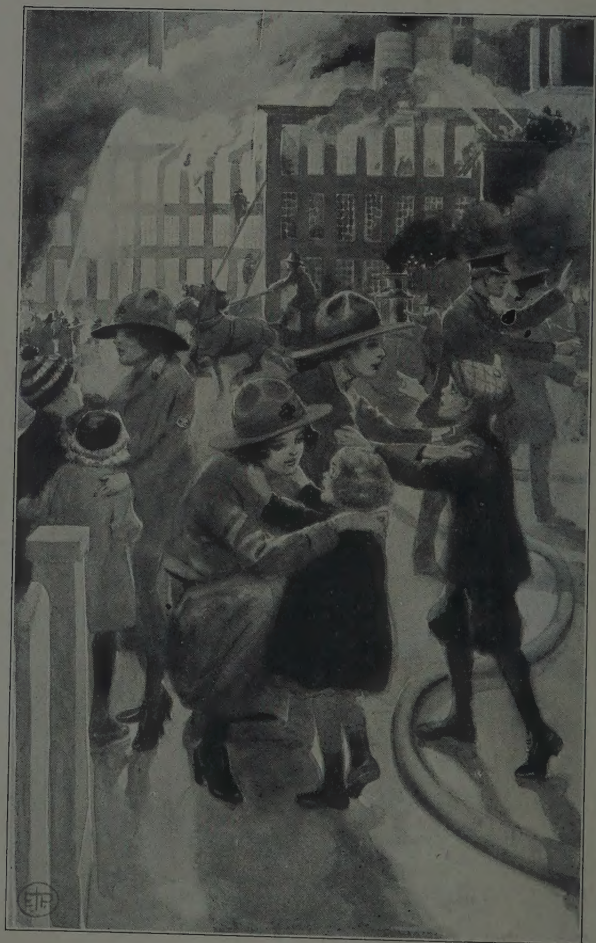
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The Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing
The Girl Scouts in Beechwood Forest
The Girl Scouts of the Round Table
The Girl Scouts in Mystery Valley
The Girl Scouts and the Open Road



THIS WAS THEIR FIRST IMPORTANT TEST
(See page 149)

THE GIRL SCOUTS SERIES

The Girl Scouts of the Round Table

By

MARGARET VANDERCOOK

Author of "The Ranch Girls Series,"
"The Red Cross Girls Series," "Stories
About Camp Fire Girls," etc.

Illustrated

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CHAPTER I

THE WHITE KNIGHT

THE snow had fallen several days before. This afternoon the ground was hard and white, with a thin crust of ice.

Spinning in the air were small silver crystals that danced in the winter wind as if with no thought of ever settling down upon the earth.

Driving along the road, Tory Drew felt their light, cold touch on her forehead and cheeks. The warm blood in her rushed up to meet them, her face and eyes glowed.

She was alone and on her way to call upon Memory Frean in her House in the Woods.

An hour before she had been despondent. Now she felt a pleasant rush of excitement and a sense of adventure.

Originally she had not intended to make the little journey alone. At present she was rejoicing in her loneliness.

She had stopped at the shabby old house across from her own to ask Dorothy McClain to accompany her, but finding Dorothy away from home had made no further effort for companionship.

There were other Girl Scouts who would gladly have joined her. Memory Frean was a member of their Council, and during the past summer in Beechwood Forest their own Patrol of the Eagle's Wing Troop had learned to know her intimately.

Tory's horse moved slowly and serenely with little urging from her. The tang and beauty of the afternoon occasionally stirred him to small spurts of speed.

Ordinarily Mr. Richard Fenton's riding horse, only recently Tobias had been broken for driving.

This afternoon he was drawing a newly purchased two-seated sleigh with Tory Drew as driver.

Now and then she made an impatient movement of her reins and smiled, appreciating the fact that Tobias would not move any faster than his own inclination ordered. Besides, she was in no particular hurry. So long as the sun shone with its early afternoon radiance upon the white world surrounding her, she enjoyed being a part of the great outdoors.

The wind blew harder and the snow danced faster and still Tory laughed. The House in the Woods would appear like a

miniature fairy palace when she finally reached it.

It was Friday, and she had received permission from her aunt, Miss Victoria Fenton, to remain for the night. Therefore, when darkness fell she and Miss Frean could sit by the open fire and talk as only they could talk.

If of late life had not been so satisfactory as usual, Memory Frean would help set things right.

Only a little more than a year before on an autumn afternoon they had met along this self-same road.

The thought of Westhaven without Memory Frean, Victoria Drew did not like to contemplate.

Since her arrival in the little New England town of Westhaven two friends she had come to consider indispensable to her happiness, Memory Frean and Katherine Moore.

No longer was Kara to be found in the Gray House on the Hill, her own title for the village orphan asylum.

Counting the days, Tory felt it incredible that she and Kara had been separated only two months. But then she was one of the persons who measured time not by the calendar but by her own needs.

After the excitement of helping Kara make ready to leave had followed a natural reaction. Then word had come that the other girl was settled in a small hospital in New York City. How long she must wait before the doctors could say whether she would be able to walk again no one would predict.

Kara was struggling to be patient. Tory appreciated that she should be no less patient, yet uncertainty was peculiarly hard for her restless nature.

This morning Kara's final letter had announced that she might hope to hear by Christmas. Until then they must both be brave.

With all Tory Drew's vivid charm and sweetness, she did not possess the force of character of the other girl. However, their lives had been very different. After her mother's death, Victoria Drew, who preferred to be known as Tory, had lived with her artist father, wandering about Europe. Eighteen months before, he had married a second time. He had then sent her to be brought up as an American girl in the little town of Westhaven, with her mother's unmarried brother and sister, Mr. Richard Fenton and Miss Victoria Fenton.

No such background favored Kara. Found by a passer-by in a deserted cabin when little more than a baby, until her accident in Beechwood Forest the summer before, Kara had lived in the village orphan asylum. Her name, Katherine Moore, pinned to her dress, was all that was so far known of her history or parentage. She had gone with her Patrol of Girl Scouts to the woods to camp for the summer. Here, an accident which had not appeared serious at the time made it probable that she would never walk again.*

Her thoughts turning from one friend to the other, Tory became more dispirited.

She did not look overhead to see that the clouds were deepening and the sun on the snow shining less bright. No longer were the snowflakes dancing in the air, but settling thick and fast on the hard crust of the ice.

However, when she drew up before the front door of the House in the Woods she was finally aware of the fact.

It was good to observe the small spiral of smoke ascending through the brick chimney and to catch the reflection of the fire on the window glass. Preferring first to make her horse comfortable for the night, Tory led

* See "Girl Scouts in Beechwood Forest."

him to the stable at the back of the house, unhitched and fed him.

With her task accomplished, on her way to the house Tory found her hands and face aching from the cold. She received the impression that although fighting valiantly against the wind and snow, if the contest should be a long one she would be defeated.

Her knock at the front door became more imperative than polite, more a demand than an appeal.

No one opened the door.

The girl did not knock again. A sudden gust of wind blew her forward. She caught hold of the knob, felt it turn and pushed open the door.

The room inside was warm, glowing and empty.

Tory called, but there was no reply.

By the side of the fireplace was a pile of logs sufficient to last twenty-four hours. Removing her wraps and replenishing the fire, the newcomer sat down on the stool she regarded as her especial property.

There was not much light in the wide room save the flames of crimson and gold from the fire. The window blinds were open, but the sunlight of an hour before had vanished.

The light through the glass was gray and opaque.

Tory frowned. Yet she was really extremely comfortable and reasonably serene again. Christmas was not far off. Her uncle had promised to take her for her first visit to New York. With her artist father she had been in London, Paris and Rome; and the time was approaching when she should behold the greatest city in her own country.

Tory Drew's frown at present was not for herself or Katherine Moore. She was troubled by Memory Frean's absence from her home.

No need to ponder where she had gone, or why.

Tory observed the absence of the rusty leather bag that ordinarily sat in the corner by the odd cabinet.

From the depth of this same bag she had received the gift of the Eagle's Wing which had been her talisman in Westhaven. Later her Troop of Girl Scouts had chosen the Eagle's Wing for its crest.

Never did Miss Frean fail to carry this bag when upon a pilgrimage to some one ill or in trouble in the neighborhood who asked her sympathy and help.

The laws and purposes of the outdoors,

some of its simple gifts of healing, Miss Freat had studied and applied.

She would realize that the storm would be a heavy one and return home in a little while.

In the meantime, the girl, knowing she would be found a welcome guest, sat by the fire, sometimes dreaming, at others troubled by Miss Freat's delay.

She had always been able to see pictures in the firelight.

At present she pretended to observe a procession of knights marching through the flames. The last knight perished and Tory aroused herself to action.

Outside it was now dark, so that Miss Freat would be at home at any moment, tired and hungry.

She would be glad to discover she was not to spend the long winter evening alone.

Lighting a lamp, Tory set it in the window as a beacon guide to the mistress of the house. Another she placed in the center of the table, which she laid for supper.

Having spent many hours in the House in the Woods with Memory Freat, Tory was familiar with all its domestic arrangements.

Yet to-night she had an odd sense of unreality, a fanciful impression that she was in a

little house of mystery shut in by the white guards outside. Now and then they rattled and shook the doors and windows as if they wished to enter.

She had been glad that Miss Frean had left her front door unlocked. She rarely ever fastened it. Since her own arrival Tory had seen that it was securely bolted.

Seven o'clock and the water was boiling on the oil stove in the kitchen, the bread sliced for toast, and the bacon and eggs waiting to be cooked on the instant.

At half-past Tory ate her supper alone.

At eight o'clock she went to the front door and half opened it with the impulse to go forth and search for her friend.

Tory saw the absurdity of this idea, for she had no conception where to begin the search. The conviction was stealing over her that instead of waiting through the quiet hours for the return of Memory Frean she should have gone back to her home in West-haven before dark. There was more than a possibility now that Miss Frean would remain for the night at the home of the ill person for whom she was caring. That she could be away on any other errand that would absorb so much time did not occur to her unexpected guest.

Half an hour later Tory's serenity completely vanished, when suddenly the idea of remaining alone in the little House in the Woods for the night swept over her with a sense of panic. Never had she been alone anywhere for a night in her entire lifetime. Here she was in the heart of the country with no neighbor within a mile. Often she had wondered and worried over Miss Frean's living here alone, yet the terror of a winter's night in the midst of a storm had never before touched her imagination.

And Tory's imagination was keener than most persons'.

The big room became haunted with shadows. The gusts of wind outside that had given her a sense of satisfaction and the impression of being safely cloistered during the afternoon were now wailing spirits struggling to enter.

Tory was now walking up and down the floor straining her ears to catch the sound of approaching footsteps. If only Memory Frean would return, there would still be time for a few happy hours together.

Memory Frean must of course be spending the night with her patient, who had been too ill to permit her to return earlier in the evening

Tory realized that she should have gone back to her own home in Westhaven as soon as she discovered her hostess's absence.

It was too late now to consider this. Besides, the storm made it out of the question.

Restlessly she continued walking up and down the serene and familiar room, but Tory's own serenity had vanished. The room haunted by shadows, she must remain here alone until daylight.

Always she had suffered from an ardent imagination. At times it afforded her more entertainment than anything else in the world. To-night she would have been glad to be spared it.

Straining her ears, she kept hoping for the return of Miss Frean, notwithstanding the conditions outside.

At bedtime Tory arrived at a desperate decision.

No matter what the reality, she could face it. She would go back to Westhaven.

An unnerving self-pity overwhelmed her.

In the old brown-and-gold drawing-room of the Fenton homestead her uncle and aunt were perhaps nodding over their evening conversation. They would be missing her presence. Suppose they dreamed of her present plight?

She put on her coat and wrapped her fur tightly about her.

A barn lantern hung inside the kitchen door.

Lighting it, Tory once more opened the front door of the little House in the Woods.

Her lamp went out, she was enveloped in a spiral column of swirling snow.

On the path and just below the catalpa tree Tory seemed to see a tall figure shining in white and silver.

She knew of course this was an illusion, nevertheless, she banged the door shut with all the force at her command.

Then, as sleep appeared out of the question, piling the fire with logs, once more she sat down, now to watch and wait for the coming of morning.

CHAPTER II

THE ROUND TABLE

"But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)—
To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink like some full-breasted swan
That fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

TORY DREW glanced up from the
pages of the book she had been read-
ing throughout the long night.

Dawn was touching with pale fingers the
outside world. The fire to which she had
failed to pay any attention in the past hour

was a hot bed of glowing ashes. The lamp was beginning a sputtering warning that the end of its supply of oil was drawing near.

Still for several moments more Tory read on. A few verses and she would have finished reading Tennyson's "Idylls of the King." The poems had held her enchanted many hours.

Not that Tory had read for so long a time without stopping. Twice she had thrown herself upon the couch drawn near the fire and had done her best to sleep. On both occasions the terror of the night and storm and her loneliness seized hold on her.

Every Girl Scout resolution was summoned and recited. Now and then Tory repeated them aloud to fortify her courage. Notwithstanding, she continued unable to lose consciousness, and rising again would go back to her book.

Fortunately for Victoria Drew, since her arrival in Westhaven the winter before she had become the intimate comrade of her uncle, Mr. Richard Fenton. In the beautiful library at the Fenton house she frequently prepared her school lessons for the following day. Oftentimes in search of a special piece of information she would hunt among the old

books on the shelves above her head. Occasionally she sat listening while Mr. Fenton read aloud.

Until her friendship with her uncle Tory had not cared a great deal for books. She was not so enthusiastic a reader as several other girls in her Patrol of Scouts. But there were certain stories and romances, pages of history that appealed to Tory's ardent imagination with peculiar force.

She would have explained that she loved to read whatever created the most vivid mental picture.

In this lay the fascination for Tory in Tennyson's "Idylls of the King." She had never read the entire group of poems until to-night; only listened to an occasional extract or quotation recited by Mr. Fenton. She had, however, heard the story of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table.

To intensify her interest Mr. Fenton had described the frescoes of Sir Galahad and his search for the Holy Grail, painted by a great artist. He had promised to take her some day to Boston to see them.

Alone to-night, Tory had seen her own vision, and been inspired with a new idea.

Now she was weary and very sleepy.

Over her own costume she was wearing a warm crimson wrapper of Miss Frean's.

Heaping the fire with the last remaining logs, she lay down again, drawing the covers over her head to shut out the cold white light of dawn. This time promptly Tory fell asleep. The sleep was not particularly heavy. Certainly she was listening for a sound outside that might announce the return of Memory Frean to her own home. Had she been forced to stay at another house because of the storm or illness, Tory believed she would come home as soon as possible.

Naturally in her semiconscious condition Tory's dreams were confused. Her head was filled with chivalrous romances of the past, with stories of knights and ladies and tournaments. Never far away was the thought of her own Girl Scout organization. Prosaic though it might appear to some persons, for Tory it held endless ideals and romances. At present in her dreams, amid the combination of impressions the figure of King Arthur appeared, and "Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces."

King Arthur seemed to have met Memory Frean somewhere, and was escorting Miss Frean to the little House in the Woods,

accompanied by a troop of Knights of the Round Table.

One of them was making an extraordinary amount of noise. The knight must have ridden his horse up to the front door. He was pounding upon it as if he were demanding admittance.

Half dazed, Tory at last sat up on the edge of the couch.

At dawn she had raised one of the blinds. Now the sun outside was making a white magic on the snow as beautiful as any picture in her imagination.

There was no magic, however, with regard to the noise; it was unmistakably real.

Tory half stumbled, half ran across the cold floor in her stockinged feet, with the dressing gown close about her.

She turned the key and her hand was on the knob when she paused an instant.

Her eyes traveled to an old-fashioned clock that hung above the mantel; it was not yet seven o'clock.

The sound outside was an odd one; scarcely could she imagine it made by Memory Fream.

Tory was still tired and anxious, more so than she had been during her long vigil. Never had she read so much and for so long a

time and certainly not under such circumstances.

"Memory, is it you?" the girl's voice called.

The following instant a huge body flung itself against the door so that the little house shook with the impact.

Tory had the good sense to cross over to the window. More fully awake and with daylight come, she had less sense of nervous fear.

The snow outside lay nearly level with the window sill, although it had ceased to fall. The morning air was clear and shining. The white arms of the trees were outstretched as if in benediction.

Unable to see through the frosted glass, Tory partly raised the window.

She gave a little cry as the figure bounded from the door to the window. The cry was not of fear but of amused relief.

The early morning intruder was a dog that lived in the neighborhood and was an especial friend of Miss Frea's. She it was who had named him "The Emperor."

He had not appeared at the camp in Beechwood Forest the summer before as often as the Girl Scouts had expected. Apparently the Emperor regarded only a few persons with

affection. The confusion of camp life did not please him to the extent of the quiet little House in the Woods.

Miss Frean had a peculiar sympathy with animals, the rare gift possessed by few persons and most of them lonely in their relation to human beings.

At present Tory Drew was not surprised by the visit from the Emperor. Troubled by the first heavy snowstorm of the winter, he had come to see if all were well with his friend.

Unhesitatingly Tory opened the door and the big dog rushed indoors. He was a Great Dane and she reeled slightly when he threw himself against her, placing his heavy paws on her two shoulders.

The voice that ordered him down was not wholly devoid of fear.

The Emperor obeyed, but seized hold of the crimson dressing gown, the property of Miss Frean, which Tory was still wearing. He began pulling at it with an intensity of appeal.

Tory recognized the situation, or was under the impression that she recognized it.

Far away as the House in the Woods was from other homes, some one must have gone

astray in the storm. The Emperor had come to the one person he knew who was sure to give aid. He had come to seek Miss Frean. Not finding her, he was making his petition to the person he had discovered in her place.

Taking off the dressing gown, Tory slipped on her shoes and overshoes, and then more slowly her coat and furs.

The dog remained patiently waiting so far as any movement of his body, but always with the suggestion of imploring haste in his eyes.

This became more apparent when, dressed for the outdoors, Tory hesitated.

Was the old truism in this case a stern reality? Was discretion not the better part of valor?

Should she follow the dog to the spot where some one may have been overcome by the storm? Once there, what possible aid had she the power to render? Yet to fail to do what she could was less possible. Not only to her principles as a Girl Scout would she be unfaithful, but she had entertained herself during the past night by considering her Patrol as Knights of a Round Table.

“All kinds of service with a noble ease, that graced the lowliest act in doing it,”

Tory quoted to herself, as she stepped out of the front door, the dog close beside her.

She stopped and caught her breath.

The air was tingling with the sharp cold, the sky above the branches of the snow-laden trees a steel blue. These were not the important facts. Save for the footprints of the dog, there was no track anywhere of man or beast; the path had completely vanished. To step out into the unpacked snow would mean that she too would be floundering about half-way up to her waist and soon in need of help instead of being able to offer it.

Nevertheless, through the intense stillness of the early winter morning Tory believed she did hear some one approaching.

The Emperor must have received the same impression. He appeared to sympathize and understand her uncertainty once she had stepped outdoors to follow his behest. Now he bounded from her.

Not long after Tory's eyes filled with tears of surprise and relief, which promptly froze into crystals.

The newcomer, making his way slowly and painstakingly toward the House in the Woods, was her uncle, Mr. Richard Fenton.

"Tory, is it well with you and Miss Freen?"

he called out. "I have been worrying about you all night and got up at daylight to come and see."

He was nearer now and Tory smiled happily upon him.

"I was under the impression I was becoming an old man, Tory dear," he remarked as he put his arm about her. "Now I am not so sure. At first I thought I never would be able to make the long walk out here. There was no other way at present and I was determined to come. You see, you borrowed my horse and sleigh for your pilgrimage yesterday afternoon."

"Yes, I know, I am sorry—no, I am not," Tory contradicted herself. "I really don't know what I am saying. What would you think if I tell you that I spent the entire night alone in the House in the Woods? Memory Frean was away when I arrived and I stayed on, thinking she would return each moment. Then night and the storm——"

"And Memory Frean did not return home?" Mr. Fenton inquired, with more anxiety in his manner and tone than Tory had suffered.

Shaking her head, she was attempting to give her own version of the situation, when the Emperor, whom they had almost for-

gotten, flung himself upon them in a perfect fury of emotional excitement.

Mr. Fenton at once understood his appeal.

"Some one is lost in the snow. How can we manage, Tory?" he asked a little helplessly. Immediately the girl braced herself to meet the conditions intelligently. Her training as a Girl Scout counted in such moments of emergency.

"After all, there is the horse and sleigh! I had completely forgotten!" she answered. "If they have survived the night as well as I have, we can drive slowly, following the Emperor. If anyone has been overcome by the snowstorm, there is a chance we could bring him to the House in the Woods."

CHAPTER III

"NOT DEATH BUT LIFE"

MR. FENTON walked on slowly with his hand at the horse's head. He was guiding and encouraging, as he floundered through the heavy snow, almost as light in quality as sifted flour.

Tory rode, holding the reins and standing so that she might better observe the objects ahead.

With apparent good judgment, the Emperor did not rush on out of sight. He kept stopping and turning to discover if his much-needed assistants in whatever cause he had at heart were following.

As a matter of fact, Tory was forgetting the seriousness of their quest. The morning was enchantingly lovely. With the appearance of her uncle her fears had subsided.

Doubtless Memory Frean would make her way home in their absence and discover that the House in the Woods had sheltered an unknown occupant during the night.

Overhead the long feathery fingers of snow suspended from the branches of the trees

sparkled and swung, falling to earth at the lightest breath of wind.

In truth the morning was remarkably still, as suddenly toward dawn the storm had ceased entirely.

Tory affectionately studied her uncle, his fine scholarly face unusually reddened and glowing by the surprising exertions of his struggles through the drifted snow. His shoulders, oftentimes slightly bowed, were now erect in order that he might better survey his surroundings.

Plainly he was more troubled than Tory by what might lie ahead.

Suddenly the Emperor halted and glanced backward with an expression of imploring anxiety, then swerving toward the left, he galloped toward a small grove of pine trees. His patience was finally exhausted.

Mr. Fenton brought his horse to a standstill.

"Stay here, please, Tory," he said quietly, but in a tone of authority that would be instinctively obeyed.

More cautiously and slowly he followed their guide.

Tory suffered in the next interval of ten minutes.

She watched Mr. Fenton striding through the opening toward the small grove of trees. Then from her present position she was unable to see him.

Of course it was only a few moments, but it seemed interminable to Tory before she heard him calling her name in a tone of voice entirely new to her ears.

It left no room for hesitation or doubt.

Getting out of the sleigh, she ran in the direction she had seen Mr. Fenton take, fighting her way with her arms and hands as well as her feet and legs.

Without realizing what she had done, she left the horse standing midway in the snow-piled country road.

Before Tory reached the grove of trees Mr. Fenton appeared at the edge, his dark figure against the white background. He was staggering under a heavy load.

No longer running ahead but close beside him stalked the Emperor with downcast head.

Tory gave a cry of mingled fear and pain.

The weight Mr. Fenton was carrying was the figure of a woman. Her coat was encrusted with snow, her body appeared entirely limp and lifeless. About the figure there was a bewildering familiarity.

An instant Tory sank to the ground. Memory Frean had been out all night trying to find her way home to the House in the Woods. She, of all persons, to have lost her way in a storm, with her knowledge of the outdoor world!

What must be done? Tory rose up but did not go forward to offer aid. Instead, she floundered back the way she had come, not many yards in reality. As soon as possible she reached her horse's head and attempted to turn him from the road.

The idea was her own, but Mr. Fenton, appreciating the wisdom of her plan, laid down his burden and came at once to her assistance.

They must get Miss Frean back to her own home. The distance was not great, and now they had made a trail the return would require only a few moments.

Inside the sleigh Tory partly supported the body of her friend, chafing her wrists and forehead with snow and vainly trying to discover some suggestion of life and warmth. Her face appeared as intensely white as the snow itself.

Less than a quarter of an hour found them before the door of the House in the Woods.

Flinging it open, Mr. Fenton, aided by

Tory, carried in the woman who had never before crossed her own threshold in such a fashion.

"Don't close the door, please; the room must be kept cool," Tory demanded, when Memory Frean had been placed on the cot she herself had occupied so short a time before. If she had believed the long night difficult, how much worse had she known the truth! Not far away the friend, dearer to her than any other woman, was perhaps dying near her own door!

There was still hope, but little more than hope. How many hours Memory Frean had been seeking shelter there was no way to conjecture!

Tory realized that she had forgotten the first aid in the emergency that faced her uncle and herself. She could recall only this one fact: the change in the temperature must not be too decided. On Memory Frean's table amid her most cherished books lay a Scout manual.

Tory's hands seemed frozen and helpless as she searched for the desired page. After a hurried glance about the unfamiliar room, Mr. Fenton had disappeared, murmuring that he would return as soon as possible. He must in some way get word to the doctor. He ap-

peared strangely annoyed that Miss Frean had no telephone. Tory had learned to understand that Mr. Fenton was often irritable when he was most deeply concerned and distressed.

His going made no especial difference. Alone Tory was struggling to remove Miss Frean's stiff clothes, now wet and clinging from the change to the indoors.

Now and then she called her friend's name, not expecting a response.

Sitting beside her what seemed an endless time, Tory continued rubbing her with rough cloths wet in cold water.

As Tory worked, her mind felt extraordinarily clear.

She recalled her first meeting with Memory Frean on the autumn road a little more than a year before, and the gift of the Indian talisman, an eagle's feather.

Later she remembered the evening in the old Fenton drawing-room when she made the surprising discovery that her uncle and Miss Frean had been devoted friends many years before, but of late had seen nothing of each other.

If the room in which she and Miss Frean were at this tragic moment had since grown

almost as familiar as her own, she recalled the impression it first had made upon her. She had realized that it possessed a kind of fine simplicity like the woman it sheltered. Tory's artistic temperament demanded that the outward form be the expression of the inner nature. How many pleasant hours she and Memory Frean had passed together in this room! They were more than pleasant hours, they had been inspiring. Only the night before she had come to seek the same inspiration. Must the past be all she would ever have from the friend so still and serene beside her?

Once only Tory arose. The fire was dying out. She must not allow this to happen, as Dr. McClain might desire the room to be warmer. There was one small log. It must be sufficient; not for another moment could she relax her vigilance.

If only she could discover the faintest warmth, one flicker of life, the lifting of an eyelash, what comfort!

Of all her Troop of Girl Scouts why should she, the most inadequate of them all, be the one to meet this disaster? So far Tory had not called it by any other name, although behind her outer consciousness there was an impression she resolutely declined to face.

Upon Mr. Fenton's return she scarcely paid any attention to him save to say what he should do to assist her. She was aware that he looked older than she had ever seen him as he awkwardly attempted to follow her directions.

Incredibly short as the time was, in reality it was an eternity to Tory before Dr. McClain's car drew up before the House in the Woods.

He came in, followed by a nurse and Dorothy McClain.

As Tory attempted to move and give place to them, she found her legs suddenly unable to do her bidding. She had grown rigid and would have fallen save that Dorothy McClain caught her.

She almost carried her out of the room into the little kitchen that adjoined the living-room.

"You must not give up now, dear; father may need our aid. I don't believe you have had any breakfast. We will all be wanting coffee by and by. We were just sitting down to the table when the message came. Don't be disheartened. Miss Frean will recover, she is so beautifully healthy and strong. Remember what an outdoor life she has led!"

As Dorothy chattered on to distract the other girl's attention, she was busily doing a number of important acts—lighting an oil stove and placing water to boil, finding the coffee and setting a corner of the kitchen table with a cup, saucer and plate.

Still Tory sat in the chair where she had been placed, but by and by drank some coffee and suggested that Mr. Fenton be persuaded to do the same thing.

For a little Dorothy's hopefulness and warm vitality wakened a response in her. This ebbed away as the moments passed and no word came that Miss Frean was recovering consciousness.

Now and then, like a chord repeating itself, a quotation she had learned the evening before came and went in her consciousness:

“We will work thy will, who love thee.”

CHAPTER IV

TORY'S DREAMS

SEVERAL weeks later Dorothy McClain and Victoria Drew were again in the kitchen adjoining the living-room of the House in the Woods.

Upon this afternoon their state of mind was altogether unlike their former one. This was apparent both in manner and expression.

Over their Girl Scout costumes they were wearing semiofficial nursing uniforms, white cotton dresses and caps of their own design.

At present Dorothy McClain was leaning anxiously over the kitchen stove stirring a kettle of simmering milk into which she had just measured a proper amount of cocoa. Her face was flushed and she was looking so pretty that Tory sat watching her with a smile of satisfaction. She herself was engaged in cutting thin slices of bread. Of late more than one cause had conspired to make Dorothy less happy than usual.

"I do hope the first visit from our entire Patrol of Girl Scouts will not be too tiring for

Miss Frean," Dorothy remarked, aware that the other girl's eyes were upon her and desiring to change the current of her thought.

Tory paused reflectively.

"I do not think it will hurt her in the least," she announced. "You seem to forget that your father gave his consent to our meeting here a week ago and that Miss Mason, our Scout Captain, insisted on the delay. If Memory has recovered sufficiently to give up her trained nurse and submit to our ministrations for the past ten days, she is well enough for our tea party. The Girl Scouts have haunted the place ever since her illness. I suppose in a way it was a relief when she and Dr. McClain agreed to allow us to do the nursing, provided only two of us at a time would take charge. I specially asked to have you with me, Dorothy, as we were together on the morning when we suffered such suspense."

Dorothy McClain straightened up and glanced around, the color slowly ebbing from her face and her clear eyes becoming disturbed and wistful.

"I wish all suspense ended in so happy a fashion, Tory dear!"

In her white cap and gown, with her dark

eyes, slender face and full red lips, Tory appeared especially attractive. Her reddish gold hair, worn short, could not be tucked out of sight, but made a bright effect of contrasting color.

She drew her brows together and frowned, not angrily but seriously.

"The other thing you are thinking of will turn out happily soon, Dorothy, I am sure. Lance is a dreamer and I suppose is selfish, but Christmas is nearly here and he cannot let the Christmas season go by without writing your father and you where he is and what he is doing. It would be too hateful and too ungrateful!"

The other girl shook her head.

"You don't know Lance as I do, Tory, although you may believe you understand each other because you both possess the artistic temperament, or think you possess it. Lance will never willingly let us know what has become of him until he has accomplished at least a portion of what he hoped for. You need not think he does not suffer and long for father and Don and me. But he realized this before he went away and decided at last he could not endure to wait longer for a chance to study his beloved music. Lance

used so often to tell me music was not like the other arts; unless one learned when one was young there was no opportunity afterwards."

"Then you forgive Lance for all he has made you and your father and Don suffer? You do care for him more than your other brothers?"

The girl who had been questioned shook her head thoughtfully.

"I don't know. I have not been able to make up my mind; perhaps I shall know some day. I only said I understood. If we could only be sure that Lance would send for some one or let us know if he were ill, father and I would be less miserable! We both realize that is just what Lance will never do. If he has made a mistake, he will feel he should pay for it. But please, Tory, let us talk of something else. I want to forget everything but our Scout meeting this afternoon. You have finished the bread and I'll butter it. The chocolate will keep warm at the back of the stove. Suppose you see if Miss Fream wishes anything before the girls and Miss Mason arrive."

Appreciating that Dorothy really wished to be alone for a few moments, Tory slipped away.

The only girl in a family of six brothers, Dorothy McClain held a peculiar affection for one of the brothers nearest her own age. Donald and Lance McClain were twins, and yet totally unlike in appearance and character. Donald was, like his sister, tall, with chestnut hair and blue eyes, and a love for athletic sports and the outdoors. Simple and normal in their habits and tastes, it had not always been easy for them to endure the vagaries of Lance, in spite of their devotion to him. The odd member of the family, Lance McClain had a passionate devotion for music with which no one of them could sympathize. He did not seem possessed of a remarkable genius; at least his father considered that he had only talent, and that music was no profession for a boy who was forced to earn his own living.

With six sons and a daughter, Dr. McClain, a village physician, did not see how it would be possible to give the delicate, erratic boy the musical education he would require. A few weeks before Lance had disappeared from his home in the small town of Westhaven, and so far no word had come from him. Remembering that he had threatened to spend the winter in New York, there could be but little doubt that he was in hiding there.

To-day the living-room of the House in the Woods was more than ordinarily lovely. Its simplicity, which approached austerity, was relieved by half a dozen vases and bowls of flowers. The eye fell at once upon a bouquet of red roses and violets in the center of a table near a big chair where a woman was half seated and half reclining. An open book was in her hands.

Tory looked from one to the other.

She was aware that the older woman had become handsomer since her illness. The heavy dark hair was more carefully arranged, since Tory herself was responsible for it. The weeks of rest and, had the girl known it, companionship, as well as other things, had softened and made more gentle the strong face with the blue, serious eyes.

"You appear to have grown into a very popular person in Westhaven, Memory," Tory said irrelevantly, "and yet I recall that at our first meeting I was made to believe by you that you possessed only a few friends in the village. I wonder why you thought this? Please put down what you are reading and tell me."

Miss Frean closed her book.

"Do you know, Tory, that since I have been

nursed by seven of the eight girls of your Eagle's Wing Patrol and the one Girl Guide who is a guest of honor, I have reached this conclusion: You are the most autocratic of the group, even if your manner now and then conceals the fact. Still, you saved my life, didn't you, dear? I consider you saved it, spending the night here and coming to search for me, and the first aid you gave me before any one else was here to help. So I presume I owe you thanks."

The girl shook her head.

"I have explained to you half a dozen times, Memory, that it was Uncle Richard who saved you, not I. I had made up my mind I did not dare face the storm alone, when he made his unexpected appearance at your door. It is not like you to seem so unwilling to be grateful to him. I told him that you said he was not to send you flowers every day. As he made no answer, I don't think he intends to obey. Still, you have not answered my question."

"Oh, yes, I have, Tory. I *was* unpopular in the village before we made friends and I became a member of your Girl Scout Council. Don't you hear the others coming? I am as excited as a girl having a first party."

Miss Frean crossed the room toward the window. She wore a dress of heavy blue silk, made simply, with a cord as a girdle. Tory had insisted upon her buying the dress, as she owned no proper costume in which to be a convalescent. As a matter of fact, Tory had made the discovery that the older woman was not so poor as the simplicity of her living made one believe. She was possessed of only a small income, but had written several books upon birds and flowers under an assumed name which increased the amount. This she did not care to have people know. She preferred bestowing the money upon persons who were in need without allowing them to guess the source.

"You are a beauty, Memory Frean! I did not think so when I first knew you," Tory remarked, following her friend to the window and drawing her back toward the warmer shelter of the room.

"Remember, please, Dr. McClain says you are not yet to expose yourself to the cold. It was dreadfully stupid of any one who knows as much as you do of the outdoors to have attempted to reach home in such a storm as you dared. Henceforth in spite of your nature lore you will have sometimes to do what you are told."

Leaning over, the older woman gave Tory a sudden, unexpected embrace. Demonstration was unusual with her.

"You flatter and scold in the same breath, Tory. I am glad you think I am prettier. No woman ever grows too old or too sensible not to wish to hear this compliment.

"Now I am convinced I hear our visitors; please open the front door, if I am not to be allowed to do it."

An hour later eight girls, their hostess and Sheila Mason, the Scout Captain, were seated close together, facing the log fire.

"I think you might tell your dream now, Tory," Miss Frean suggested, half amused and half serious.

"My dream?" Tory answered, bright spots of color showing in her ordinarily pale cheeks. "I studied the background of my dream on the long winter night when I stayed here alone awaiting Memory Frean's return."

CHAPTER V

CHRISTMAS EVE

NOT long after, the Christmas holidays began. Any number of entertainments would be given in Westhaven in which the Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing would be included. One evening they intended to make peculiarly their own.

In several homes in the village they felt perfectly privileged to hold their meetings, to give parties, or do whatever the occasion required.

Miss Victoria Fenton having learned the purpose and the influence of the Scouts, the old Fenton house was at any time at their disposal. Mrs. Peters, Joan's mother, had urged the girls to come at any time to their old-fashioned cottage, wide and empty, which sat some distance back from the street, offering a fine, open space for the outdoor drill and signalings.

Sheila Mason, the Troop Captain, was an only daughter, and her parents among the wealthiest families in Westhaven. If for no

other reason than the miracle Mrs. Mason insisted had been wrought in her daughter's life by her work among the Girl Scouts, she would have freely given up her home to their use at a moment's notice. Months before Sheila Mason seemed to have lost all interest in life, when her lover, to whom she had been engaged, was killed at the battle of Château-Thierry. Persuaded by the first Patrol of Girl Scouts in Westhaven to become their Captain, so engrossed had she grown in her work and in the girls themselves that oftentimes her former happy nature reappeared.

Members of their Council, made up of the most prominent and interesting people in Westhaven, were glad to be of service at any time.

Nevertheless, when a choice had to be made of a place for their Christmas entertainment there was not one dissenting voice: Memory Frean's little House in the Woods! Here was an intimacy and an atmosphere they found nowhere else.

Moreover, as the character of the entertainment was to be a secret from all outsiders, it was much simpler to manage at a distance from town. Memory Frean was well again

and as interested in their idea as the girls themselves.

Certainly the living-room at the House in the Woods was so transformed on the afternoon of Christmas Eve that one would never have recognized it. The walls were massed with pine and cedar and holly.

Raised upon a dais was an arm chair covered with a piece of tapestry worked in gold dragons.

Below, and filling the entire center of the room, was a circular table.

Extending around the walls of the room were eight banners of silver cloth, bearing no inscriptions save an embroidered design of an eagle's wing.

Crossed over the mantel were the American flag and the flag of the Girl Scout Troop.

At nine o'clock there was a pealing of Christmas bells that swung like a censer above the round table from which a white dove also was suspended.

"Shall we read Kara's poem that she sent from the hospital in New York as a greeting to us before we begin the other ceremony?" Tory Drew inquired.

She wore an unusual costume, but one exactly like the rest of the girls. It was com-

posed of a stiff material, a silver cloth of cotton and silk. Cut in straight lines, it had no ornamentation save a silver girdle about an inch wide and loosely tied about the waist.

Undoubtedly the costumes were striking and original and strangely becoming.

"I have asked Margaret Hale to read Kara's verse, for one reason because she will do it so much better than I, and for another because I so regret Kara's not being with us to-night of all nights that I do not trust myself. I was to tell you that Kara writes she is not under the impression that she is a poet. Being in a hospital several months has forced her to spend so much time alone that she devotes many hours to thinking of us and our holiday together last summer in Beechwood Forest.* Small wonder that Kara is more devoted to the evergreen cottage than the rest of us because of its association with her past!"

Margaret Hale arose. She was a tall, fair girl of about fifteen who had been first chosen Patrol Leader because of her influence over the other girls. To-night her hair was bound close about her head in broad plaits. With her simple, severe costume the effect was more like an old picture than a modern girl.

* See "Girl Scouts in Beechwood Forest."

She read in an agreeable voice:

"Through aisles of spreading beeches,
'Mid tangle of pendent vine,
A brown road curves and reaches
Up hillside dark with pine.

"Shelter from scorching sunshine,
Haven when days are drear,
Its slogan: Do a good turn
All ye who enter here.

"Nights when the red logs are roaring
Nights when the flame leaps high,
The bright sparks snapping and soaring,
Think of me as close by.

"In the midst of holiday meetings
Radiant with hope and cheer,
A Lone Scout sends you greetings
For Christmas and the New Year."

When the girls had ceased discussing the little poem and Kara's accident the summer before, followed a sudden silence of intense and almost painful suspense.

Sheila Mason, the Troop Captain, leaned over. Her hands were clasped tightly together. Only a few years over twenty, with pale-gold hair and delicate features, she was not much older in appearance than several

of her own Scouts. In fact, her own unfitness for her position had troubled her greatly in the early days of her work as a Captain. Of late she had become so absorbed in the work that the fear of her own unfitness only affected her occasionally.

“Before we begin what I think is going to be a rare and wonderfully beautiful occasion, I want to talk to you for a few moments.

“We were all, and I equally so, fascinated with Tory’s idea that for this winter we organize our Patrol of Girl Scouts into ‘The Girl Scouts of the Round Table’—each one of us to bear the name of one of the Knights of the Round Table and to promise among ourselves to perform whatever acts of valor and service we are able.

“The suggestion was fanciful, as most of Tory’s suggestions are, yet at first I saw no reason to object. Later I began to be troubled for fear it might in some fashion interfere with our Girl Scout principles and organization. I wrote to the National Headquarters explaining the situation and asking for information and advice. I assured them that under no circumstances would we be willing to break any rule of the organization. Our desire was to play a kind of idealized game, or something

more than a game, which would last through the winter rather than through a single evening.

"I merely wanted to tell you we have received their consent and they are deeply interested. Now it is growing late and we must begin."

An unusual solemnity fell upon the little company.

The girls remained seated at the round table.

Sheila Mason arose and, flushing, partly from embarrassment and partly from nervousness, slowly ascended the raised platform and took her seat in the chair covered with a cloth of gold. She was wearing a costume strikingly unlike any other. It was bright red in color, while about her fair hair was a band of gold.

Withdrawing from the group, Miss Frean found a place nearer the fire, but facing the eight girls about the round table. To-night her dark hair was powdered to give a suggestion of greater age. Her toilet was a strange one, a green and brown smock, with strange symbols covering it, the moon and stars, and signs of the Zodiac. She was not to be one of the Knights of the new Round Table, knighted this evening in the House in the

Woods. Instead she represented Merlin, the wise man, who "ever served the King through magic art."

Sheila Mason was King Arthur, "robed in red samite easily to be known."

No formal rehearsal had taken place of the mystic ceremony the Patrol of Girl Scouts intended to reproduce upon this Christmas Eve. Certain details and preparations, of course, had been arranged.

A misfortune that there was no audience to behold the little company at this moment!

The big room was beautiful with banners and evergreens. There were no lights save the firelight and the seven branched candlesticks upon the mantel and table. The odd costumes, the strange colors, the ardent faces about the round table made an unforgettable picture.

Outside, the night was clear and cold and still, with a crescent moon in the sky.

Great had been the discussion of the choice of Knight to be allotted each Girl Scout. In the end the final decision had been left to the Troop Captain. At present no girl knew the Knight she would portray until her name was called and she went forward to receive her investiture.

From her chair by the crimson and golden flames Memory Freaan at this instant repeated:

“Then the King in low, deep tones,
And simple words of great authority,
Bound them by so strait vows to his own self,
That when they rose, knighted from kneeling, some
Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,
Some flush’d, and others dazed, as one who wakes
Half-blinded at the coming of a light.”

“Margaret Hale.”

Surprised by hearing her own name before the others, Margaret Hale hesitated. She then arose and, biting her lips to hide their trembling, went forward and kneeled before the Troop Captain.

Lightly Miss Mason, as King Arthur, touched her upon the shoulder with the point of a silver sword, exclaiming:

“Bold Sir Bedivere, first made of all the Knights,
Strike, thou art worthy of the Table Round.”

Returning to her place, Joan Peters followed Margaret, repeating the little act of homage before the golden chair and hearing the words:

“Sir Percival, whom Arthur and his knighthood called the Pure.”

Tory Drew came forward to be appointed the third Knight. She looked as if she were dreaming, as if unaware that they were only going through a picturesque ceremony as an unusual Christmas entertainment. Of course they intended to add a new element of romance and of service to their work, but no one of the other girls appeared so deeply affected.

Miss Mason was conscious of this, so that Tory's attitude influenced her own. Moreover, Tory's short red-gold hair, her white face with the wide dark eyes and slender chin to-night wore an expression of singular ardor and intensity.

The Troop Captain and her friends knew that Tory through her vivid imagination had overleaped the bounds of centuries. She saw in vague outline not her own Girl Scouts and Miss Mason, not the dearly beloved room in the House in the Woods transformed to suit their purpose, but a castle in Britain, King Arthur and his famous Knights.

Miss Mason had chosen for Tory the one Knight in all the Table Round who seeks and finds the Holy Grail.

"Galahad:

And one there was among us, ever moved
Among us in white armour, Galahad.

'God make thee good as thou art beautiful,'
Said Arthur when he dubbed him knight."

When the winter evening had passed into a memory, there was a never-ending argument as to which one of the eight girls made the most impressive Knight. Of the three who stood out from the rest, Dorothy McClain was perhaps the favorite.

Her height and athletic figure, the slender, upright shoulders and the upward lift of her head gave her a kind of frank and boyish air. She was more conscious than Tory of herself and her surroundings, for she flushed hotly. Then the color left her cheeks after her investiture:

"Gareth, the last tall son of Lot and Bellicent.
A knight of Arthur working out his will,
Follow the Christ, the King,
Live pure, speak true, right wrong,
Else wherefore born?"

Teresa Peterson felt pleased with the selection the Troop Captain made for her. Not that she saw any particular meaning in the ceremony, save that it was picturesque and afforded an opportunity for wearing a fancy

costume. She was looking forward with keener anticipation to the dance Margaret Hale was to give the Girl and Boy Scouts later in the Christmas holidays.

Nevertheless, her dusky face with soft curling, dark hair and pouting lips appeared serene and good-humored as she accepted her new title.

“Pelleas, and the sweet smell of the fields
Past, and the sunshine came along with him.
Make me thy knight, because I know, Sir King,
All that belongs to knighthood. And I love
This new Knight, Sir Pelleas of the Isles.”

Edith Linder became Tristram:

“One knight
And armoured all in forest green, whereon
There tript a hundred tiny silver deer,
And wearing but a holly spray for crest
With ever scattering berries, and a shield,
A harp, a spear, a bugle.
Sir Tristram of the Woods.”

Characteristic of Louise Miller that a burning sense of her own awkwardness and unworthiness almost destroyed the pleasure she would otherwise have felt in her knighthood!

“In the midnight and flourish of his May,
Gawain, surnamed the Courteous,
Fair and strong.”

Martha Greaves, the English Girl Guide, who had spent the previous summer in Beechwood Forest with the Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing, had not returned to her home in England with the close of the summer. She had no parents to call her back and preferred to remain until the return to Westhaven of Tory Drew's father and stepmother; the latter was her cousin and nearest relative. She was not, however, living with Tory in the old Fenton homestead, but boarding with Mr. and Mrs. Peters, Joan's father and mother.

Martha had insisted that she had no place in to-night's ceremony, notwithstanding the fact that as an English girl she might have a closer historical claim than the others. However, she yielded to the persuasion of the Girl Scouts. This evening she had discarded her Girl Guide uniform and wore the knightly costume of the others:

"Geraint,
The brave Geraint, a knight of Arthur's court,
Wearing neither hunting dress
Nor weapon, save a golden-hilted brand,
A purple scarf, at either end whereof
There swung an apple of the purest gold."

CHAPTER VI

A CHRISTMAS DANCE

THE ceremony of the Knights of the Round Table had proved more serious in character than the Girl Scouts had anticipated. Margaret Hale's dance, which occurred the evening following Christmas, came as a pleasant contrast.

Her home was a large modern one with drawing-rooms opening into each other. About fifty guests were invited, the entire Troop of Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing, the Boy Scouts, who were personal friends of Margaret and her younger sisters, and a few outside friends.

The dance was called "a small and early." The guests were invited from eight until twelve. The fashion of arriving late and remaining until toward morning did not meet with the approval of the host and hostess.

To assist in making a success of this idea, Margaret's own Patrol of Scouts had promised to arrive promptly.

Mr. Fenton was to escort Tory to the dance,

and had promised to stay for an hour as a spectator.

Donald McClain had asked Tory to go with him, explaining that his sister Dorothy was to be escorted by one of their boy friends. Tory had declined. She had experienced some difficulty in inducing her uncle to be present at a dancing party. He had not attended one in twenty years. Moreover, they had promised to drive out to the House in the Woods and bring Miss Frean back with them.

Don seemed hurt, even a little angry, and Tory was puzzled. Later, she concluded that he and Dorothy were both so unhappy over Lance's disappearance that they were unlike themselves. She was delighted when Dorothy told her afterwards that Don was to take Teresa in her stead. Teresa would be happy and, Tory thought, a better partner.

The eight girls in the Patrol that now included the English girl, Martha Greaves, a temporary substitute for Katherine Moore, had agreed to dress in white with coral-colored ribbons.

Kara had written a rather pathetic little note of refusal to Margaret's invitation from her hospital in New York. Before the accident that caused her lameness she had loved

dancing more than any one of her friends. Now at Christmas time it was particularly hard to feel always resigned and cheerful. Only one fact gave her courage. Tory Drew's Christmas gift from Mr. Fenton was to be a trip to New York to see her. Recently he had included Dorothy McClain in the invitation. Mr. Fenton and Dr. McClain had been friends since boyhood, and Dorothy appeared in need of a change for the first time in her life.

Among the dancers the eight Girl Scouts of the one Patrol were easily distinguished from the others. Their white gowns with coral ribbons showed plainly among the rainbow-hued toilets of their friends.

The dance was informal and there were no programs. Nevertheless, toward the latter part of the evening Tory Drew was troubled by the fact that it was after ten o'clock and Donald had not asked her for a single dance.

Soon after their arrival they had bowed and smiled to each other over the heads of the dancers and Donald had not appeared angry. Tory had not given this idea any consideration at the time. She had merely thought how handsome and strong Don looked, and what an admirable contrast he and Teresa made.

Don was so tall and fair, with clear blue eyes

and fresh skin, and Teresa like a colorful flower with her dusky hair and dark eyes and brilliant rose cheeks. She was small and her figure prettily rounded. Best of all, Teresa had never seemed happier! She wore a small bunch of violets at her waist that Tory recognized as coming from the hotbed that was Don's especial pride and pleasure. He had brought the violets in from the woods, built the glass house that sheltered them and devoted a certain time each day to their care.

Occasionally Tory had been presented with a small offering of Don's violets, but never so many as Teresa wore to-night.

In the midst of a dance with one of the Boy Scouts in Don's Patrol, Tom Oliver, an especial friend of her own, Tory felt confused and annoyed.

How quickly Teresa was able to transfer her liking from one brother to the other! They were not in the least similar in manner or appearance, in spite of being twins, so this excuse could not be offered. Yet undoubtedly Teresa had been especially friendly with Lance McClain during the past summer in Beechwood Forest.

Then Tory's partner made some remark and she forgot what she had been thinking. It

was the merest chance that she was again dancing with Tom Oliver, more than an hour after, when the reflection that Donald had ignored her all evening recurred with especial force. Tory was fond of Don, and sorry.

Toward the close of this same dance, Tom Oliver felt an unexpected touch on his arm. He paused.

"If Tory is willing when you have finished this dance, may I speak to her?" Donald inquired.

Tory nodded, feeling a mingled sense of pleasure and uncertainty.

Why was Don so serious? He had not appeared so an hour, not a half hour before. Had he recently received bad news? Could anything have been heard from Lance?

Tory's eyes wandered among the dancers until she caught sight of Dorothy McClain, tall and fair and handsome. She looked more cheerful than in some time past, not less so. Therefore whatever information may have come to Don, he had not yet imparted to his sister. It then occurred to Tory that Don might be wishing to tell her first and ask her help.

She was glad when her own dance was finished and Don was found standing at her elbow.

"Come on, Tory, please, I want to talk to you and I think I know a halfway quiet place," he announced, and led the way.

Accustomed to Don's directness, without thinking of disputing it, Tory slipped out after him, avoiding speaking or catching the eye of any one who might stop them even for a moment.

The quiet spot was a pile of cushions under the bend of the long flight of stairs, partly concealed by palms.

Even after they were comfortably settled Don did not speak immediately.

Accustomed to his slowness, Tory did not ordinarily object, but to-night she was impatient.

"What is it, Don? You have not come near me all evening! Have you had word from Lance that he is not well or that anything has happened to him? Please tell me at once."

Still for another moment there was no answer, and afterwards Tory was too startled by Don's answer to reply.

Immediately Don apologized.

"I am sorry, Tory. I ought not to have said such a thing to you or to any one else. So far as I can recall I never made such a hateful speech about Lance in my life. I

hope I never will again. But this business of Lance's behaving like a kid of five or six years old has been too much for me. It is the worst thing that has happened in our family since my mother's death.

"The rest of us have always suspected Lance was father's favorite, chiefly because he looks like my mother and has been so delicate. Since Lance cleared out there is no doubt of the matter. Father has grown to look ten years older in these last few weeks. He says he is not going to look for Lance, that when he has had enough he will come home. Just the same, he does not have a moment free from uneasiness. He is crazy to find Lance, and I know he wants you and Dorothy to search for him when you go up to New York for your holiday. Wish I were coming along! Not that I'd waste any time troubling to find Lance. He deserves whatever comes to him. He always was an idiot, but I did not dream such a one as he has proved himself."

In spite of Don's almost sullen manner Tory partly understood his state of mind. In the year of their acquaintance, living across the street from each other, and Tory one of his sister's most intimate friends, she had

appreciated many points about Don that most people failed to realize.

He hated to see people unhappy and would make almost any sacrifice to save them from unhappiness, provided he could grasp the cause of their trouble. In any and every illness Lance had suffered during their boyhood, Don had devoted himself to his whims. He had admired Lance's cleverness, his sense of humor, even his talent for music up to the present. Now he was puzzled and troubled and resentful. If he had not thought Lance as selfish as the rest of the family considered him, now he believed him more so.

"You see, Tory, no one talks or thinks of any one but Lance at our house these days, if father is not around. Dot has nearly made herself ill worrying over him. Now when I have something rather special I want to confide to you and have been trying for the opportunity all evening, you begin by asking about Lance and looking nervous and miserable.

"Lance McClain is under the impression that he has such a talent for music he can't live any longer without his chance. Maybe he thinks that music can't live without him. It is the biggest—well, I won't say what, I ever heard of in my life. I give him about

two months more of half-starving to death in New York and he never will want to hear the word music again."

Tory shook her head.

"No use trying to argue the matter with you, Don. You won't agree with me, but you are mistaken about Lance.

"Let us not talk about him any more. Please tell me the something 'rather special' you intended to tell me. I am dying to hear. And I am awfully glad you have not been angry and avoided me on purpose during the evening."

Donald's clear fresh skin colored. He seemed mollified by Tory's little friendly speech and slightly ashamed of his own unusual attitude.

He admired Tory Drew more than any one of Dorothy's friends. She might not be so pretty as several of the others; he had no way of knowing, since to him she possessed so much more interest and charm.

He liked her pallor, the red-gold of her hair and her wide, friendly dark eyes. She did not seem to have a trace of self-consciousness like so many other girls. Nor did Don consider that she had half as much vanity as she had the right to reveal. She had seen so

much more of the world, traveling abroad with her artist father until her arrival in Westhaven the year before, small wonder that her manners were attractive.

"It is only a small matter after all, Tory. I have been voted the most popular fellow in my class and chosen Class President for the year. What a duffer I sound telling you in this fashion! After all, I suppose I am more of an ass than Lance. And by the way, Tory, it is not true I would not search for him if I had a chance or go to him if he is in trouble. I suppose you are right. He may be a kind of a halfway genius and an ordinary fellow like I am can't be expected to understand him.

"You'll dance with me as often as you can for the rest of the evening?" Tory agreed.

CHAPTER VII

A CITY OF TOWERS

NEITHER Dorothy McClain nor Victoria Drew possessed any real acquaintance with New York City. Dorothy had been there only once as a little girl of six years old on a shopping expedition with her mother. Tory had arrived in New York with the friends from on board the steamer that sailed from Cherbourg. She had, however, spent only a single night at a hotel, leaving next morning for Westhaven, a few hours' journey away.

Therefore, the ride into the city was not sufficiently long to cover the emotions it held for both girls. They were to spend four or five days in the city, that Mr. Fenton declared the most beautiful and stimulating in the world.

Tory did not agree with Mr. Fenton's estimate of New York, but she was willing to be convinced.

He was interested to watch the effect the great city might have upon Tory's impres-

sionable nature, believing that Dorothy's quieter outlook would prove a comfortable balance.

The day was clear; there was no trace of the snowstorms that had left patches of snow upon the fields and gardens of Westhaven.

Driving up Fifth Avenue to their hotel, a little beyond the center of Manhattan Island, the atmosphere appeared more glistening than the white face of the snow. The sun struck golden rays across the high buildings, their towers seemed to swim in a clear light with a deep blue sky above.

The people came and went so rapidly on the sidewalks that Tory and Dorothy were aghast. Neither said anything, yet they were grateful when a policeman halted the traffic and they were able to get a more steadfast view of their surroundings.

Tory's face shone, her dark eyes widened, her lips parted with that eager expression of desire that her uncle loved and a little feared. No one who had not known him as a boy would have believed that he too once possessed her ardent interest in life. He had let so much slip by him—a home, a family, a career. Were it possible, he did not intend that Tory should sacrifice so much!

"It is a wonder city, a city of towers, Uncle Richard," Tory whispered. "I am not sure I like it so well as London and Paris. Somehow it reminds me a little of both, and yet is like neither."

Dorothy laughed.

"You know, Mr. Fenton, that sounds as Tory's speeches so often do. So many ideas come to her at once that she pours them out in a single breath and makes her audience gather up the lost threads.

"If Lance is working here in New York I do not believe he is so unhappy as Don and I usually think he is."

Nothing save luncheon and placing their suitcases in their room kept the two girls from going directly to Kara.

Tory had written her to say they would appear early in the afternoon.

The hospital was some distance uptown, but they reached it in an amazingly short time by the subway.

Mr. Fenton escorted the girls, but left them at the hospital entrance, promising to return later.

Tory's arms were filled with red roses she had purchased from the florist on the corner after they left the subway. Dorothy's gift

was more modest, a bunch of claret-colored grapes.

Nevertheless, at the threshold of the hospital the girls halted.

"I don't know exactly why, but I rather dread going in, don't you, Tory?" Dorothy murmured. "Oh, well, I presume you are not so stupid! For a doctor's daughter, I am singularly nervous about illness. And I never have grown accustomed to the thought of Kara's misfortune."

The other girl shook her head.

"Let's not talk of it now. Kara is waiting and might guess how we feel."

Receiving uncertain directions from a nurse, the visitors wandered down a scrupulously sanitary hall, to knock timidly upon a door, numbered 17.

It was Kara's voice that answered: "Come in."

When the door opened she moved toward them on two crutches, very timid and haltingly.

Before they could do more than exclaim, she seated herself in a chair, the old humorous expression about the corners of her lips and eyes reappearing.

"I am not a pedestrian yet. But this is better than sitting still forever. Come here and

let me embrace you both at once. Dorothy, please see that Tory does not weep and spoil my red roses. I suppose they are mine."

After a little the girls found cushions and placed themselves on the floor at Kara's feet.

"Now tell me every single thing that has happened since I left," she said. "Don't think anything is too unimportant."

"But, Kara, won't you tell us first? It is so hard to wait," Tory pleaded.

No need to inquire what she meant.

The thin face with the beautiful gray eyes and long dark lashes, the lips grown thinner and less colorful in these past months, slowly parted.

"There is not so much to tell you as I hoped when I wrote you. Waiting and hoping are still my passwords.

"I am far happier. See the lovely things I have made! I have been practicing dress-making and weaving and basket-making, whatever I can do with my hands. I want you to take what you wish for gifts and show the rest to our Girl Scout Council so that I may pass my proficiency tests. I am afraid I cannot manage to be a First Class Scout so soon as the other girls, but I don't want to fall too far behind."

"If the decision were mine you would be a First Class Scout now, Kara. By the way, we have brought you a banner." Dorothy unrolled a package.

It revealed one of the banners that had hung among the evergreens high up on the wall of the House in the Woods on Christmas Eve.

"We were to declare you one of the Knights of our Round Table, Kara." Tory smiled. "I have an order from King Arthur. Do you wish to be Sir Boris, whose eyes were an outdoor sign of all the warmth within, or Sir Lancelot, 'his warrior, whom King Arthur loved and honored most, first in tournament'?"

Kara's shook her head with emphasis, her eyes resting with affection and amusement on one of the faces upturned toward hers.

"Good gracious, I don't wish to be any kind of Knight of any Round Table! For me it is enough to be a Girl Scout. I am sure the idea of the Girl Scouts of the Round Table originated with you, Tory."

Tory flushed.

"Yes, there isn't any harm. The Girl Scout organization does not object. The truth is we were not so interested in our Girl Scout work this winter as we had been in the past.

We missed being together at camp and the outdoor sports and opportunities. Then, too, we missed you, Kara. Miss Mason realized this and we talked things over together, wondering what we had best do. Then one night when I was alone at Miss Frean's I read the story of the Round Table. Later we decided to have a Round Table of our own. Few of our winter meetings can take place out of doors, so we have decided to hold our Patrol meetings about a round table. On our banners we can embroider whatever good deeds we have accomplished. The other girls are pleased with the idea, Kara, but you are always a practical person to the last."

"I am interested, Tory, only I am too much an outsider now to understand.

"I have one important piece of news. Remember the letters found in the evergreen cottage at the close of our holiday in Beechwood Forest? I gave them to Mr. Hammond for safe keeping, when I believed they had nothing to do with the fact that I was found deserted in the cabin years before. You know Mr. and Mrs. Hammond are in town and often bring Lucy to see me.

"Well, the other day Mr. Hammond by chance observed an advertisement in a morn-

ing paper signed with the name used in one of the old letters. The advertisement asked that some one from Westhaven communicate with the writer. Mr. Hammond wrote and is to see the person next week. Not one chance in a thousand that your humble servant is connected with the mystery! But Mr. Hammond and I decided that it was one way to keep oneself from being dull."

"I am afraid it does not sound very hopeful, dear," Dorothy answered reluctantly. "Would you like to hear about Lance?"

At this instant there was a knock on the door and before Kara could reply a nurse suggested that the visit must end.

The girls might return another afternoon, but a half hour's call was all that was allowed at one time.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CALL

AMONG the excitements of Tory's visit to New York was a call she was to make upon an artist friend of her father's.

Pleased with several of the sketches Tory had made during the past summer in camp, Mr. Drew desired an opinion upon her work from some one whose judgment he trusted. He knew himself to be too interested to be a good critic of his daughter's gift. Now and then he believed himself too severe, that he expected more artistic gift than was possible in one of Tory's age. Again he feared that his own devotion blinded him to conspicuous faults in her work.

So Tory brought with her a letter from her father to Philip Winslow. She was to call by appointment on a certain afternoon at his studio in the downtown section of the city.

Dorothy accompanied her, and the two girls discovered the house without difficulty, an old, somewhat dilapidated building, with the

paint peeling from the house and a long flight of steps leading from the front door.

Philip Winslow was not a successful artist from the standpoint of worldly prosperity. His painting had never met with the recognition that his fellow-artists believed should have been his. He had, however, chosen to do the character of work he liked without consideration of the public.

More popular and with a reputation in two continents, nevertheless Tory's father considered his friend a greater painter than himself. If it were possible and he were willing at any time to accept her as a pupil, Mr. Drew greatly desired Tory to study with the other man. Armed with half a dozen sketches and her letter, Tory and Dorothy started up the long flight of steps. The house was five stories high. One saw from a large north window of glass that the studio was at the top.

The girls had been going out constantly ever since their arrival, not only in the daytime, but nightly visits with Mr. Fenton to the different theaters.

The excitement seemed not to have had any disastrous effect upon Tory; she was gayer and more full of energy and enthusiasm with each passing hour.

The same thing was not true of Dorothy McClain. Dorothy was an outdoor person who had always lived in a small village. The crowding, the noises and the restlessness of the city she found very tiring.

On this especial expedition Tory had not considered it wise that Dorothy accompany her. At lunch she had observed how pale and weary she looked, suggesting that Dorothy lie down and try to sleep while she was making her visit.

The proposal required a good deal of unselfishness upon Tory's part. Very especially she wished to have Dorothy with her during the approaching interview.

She was nervous over meeting a strange artist and exhibiting her own work. The visit in itself would not have troubled her. She had heard her father talk of Philip Winslow many times. He owned several of the other man's pictures. What was embarrassing was to show him her sketches. As each hour passed and the time drew nearer she became more convinced they had better have been relegated to the trash basket.

She could not be sorry, therefore, when Dorothy utterly declined to consider the idea of giving up the trip. She had never been

inside an artist's studio in her entire existence, and she wanted to know what this artist thought of Tory's gift.

Moreover, Mr. Fenton had a business engagement at the same hour and would not have been willing to permit Tory to keep her appointment alone.

In the climb up the stairs Dorothy chanced to be in the lead. Now and then she seemed tired and stopped for a moment to rest and get her breath.

The character of the place was not the surprise to Tory that it was to the other girl. In Paris and London Tory had been in old houses converted into lodgings as poor and dark as the present one. She knew that one might open a door and find an apartment artistically furnished and extremely comfortable. Again, one might chance upon a room bare and sordid, if its occupant had been in ill luck and unable to dispose of a picture, a poem, or a play that he had thought he would be pretty sure to sell.

At the end of the third flight of steps suddenly Dorothy sat down. She was biting her lips and had grown so pale that Tory was alarmed.

"Good gracious, Dorothy dear, what is the

matter? Can't you go on? Had we best go back downstairs? Are you about to faint?"

Dorothy shook her head and smiled. It was so like Tory to ask half a dozen questions at once.

"No, nothing so dreadful as fainting. I had a sharp pain in my side and think I had best sit still a little while."

Dorothy's color did not grow better. Instead, she became whiter and caught hold of the railing for support, leaning her head against the banister.

The other girl hesitated. Should she continue on up the two additional flights of stairs and ask Mr. Winslow to come to their aid? Certainly Dorothy would to faint if nothing were done to revive her! Yet she really ought not to be left alone at present even for a few moments.

Tory glanced up and down the stairs, hoping some one might be approaching from one or the other direction to whom she could appeal for help.

She saw no one. She did, however, observe a door near the landing where Dorothy was seated standing ajar. From inside she could hear faint sounds of music, so some one must be at home.

Tory was accustomed to acting upon impulse. She did not mention to her companion what she intended doing. She walked over and knocked on this door. No one replied. At the same instant the notes of music grew louder so that the musician could scarcely have heard.

Tory pushed the door open.

She then looked inside the room, planning to explain her behavior as soon as she could attract any one's attention.

She beheld a figure seated at a piano, with hands upon the keys and apparently oblivious of the world.

"Lance McClain, it cannot be you!" the girl exclaimed.

There was still no answer. Dorothy McClain heard and managed to get up and come toward the door which Tory had now opened widely.

Both girls recognized Lance, although his back was turned toward them.

He looked thinner. A sheet of music was on the rack before him and his head was upturned. Neither girl wished to disturb him at present, not until he had finished what he was playing. They did not move or speak again.

Dorothy was not familiar with the music; she only realized that it was more beautiful and more ambitious than anything Lance had ever attempted to play at home.

Tory recognized the Andante from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. She had heard it played by an orchestra and appreciated that the music was too great for Lance's meager training.

Still, there was something in his playing that held her spellbound and brought tears to her eyes and to Dorothy's, who now had completely forgotten her discomfort of a short time before.

One heard the movement that sounds like the rippling of many waters, then the siren call from the depth of the water and of life itself. At last the beautiful, triumphant finale.

When Lance McClain ended he dropped his head on his hands.

"Lance!" Dorothy said softly.

This time Lance jumped up as if in a sudden panic of fear.

"Good gracious, Dot! It can't be you! I am not dreaming! I have had several confounded dreams about you and father and Don lately. But you must be real, because here is Tory with you and it may not be polite

of me, but I am obliged to say I have not dreamed about her. Who told you where to find me? I am as mad as a hornet and gladder than I have ever been over more than one or two things in my life.

"You did not hear me trying to murder that Andante, did you? I hope not. Wasn't it awful the mistakes I made?"

This was Lance, there was no doubting it, trying to carry off a difficult and painful situation with his old humor.

Nevertheless he kept his arm tight about Dorothy's shoulders and at this instant buried his head in her shoulder like a child.

"No use, Lance. I have already seen how badly you look," Dorothy protested. "Please let us sit down somewhere while I tell you what you won't believe. We found you merely by accident. Tory and I are in New York for a few days' holiday with Mr. Fenton. I know Mr. Fenton has been trying to find news of you to take back to father, but has not succeeded. Tory, will you please tell how we happened to come to this building? One thing, Lance, I am glad to find you have such a charming room."

Dorothy sank down on a divan piled with sofa cushions, Lance and Tory sitting down beside her.

"You don't think these are my quarters, do you, Dot? That would be too good to be true."

Tory made her explanation very brief.

"Then if this is *not* your room, tell us everything from the hour you left home. What are you doing here and whose piano were you playing? I don't believe you have had a real meal since you ran away."

"Don't call it running away, please, Dot? Say I had to answer a desire that was too strong to be resisted.

"I am afraid you and Tory will be disappointed at what I have to tell you. I wrote to several places in New York and had secured a position here before I lit out from home. It does not pay much and I knew father would never believe I could live on so small a sum. I understood he could not afford to give me anything outside and I have managed to live, somehow!" Lance murmured under his breath. "I am busy at odd hours and sometimes I have an afternoon free. This chanced to be one of them."

The boy's expression altered.

"I have not yet told you of my good luck, and I have had more than I deserve. You might as well know the truth. I am nothing

but a messenger boy. One afternoon I came here to this room and heard some one playing on the piano, some one who really understood music. There wasn't any doubt of that blessed fact.

"I suppose I stood entranced, listening. Anyhow the musician seemed to guess how much I cared. We began talking and I was pretty homesick and wretched and must have poured out everything I was feeling at the time. The result was we became friends. I suppose I have the right to say friends. He gave me permission to come here and play on his piano when I had an opportunity. I have a key to the door and can come and go when I like. Something bigger and more wonderful, I am studying music with him two evenings a week. He gives me a lesson for as long a time as he can spare."

There was a new tone in Lance's voice, a boyish admiration the two girls had never known him to feel for any one before.

Tory recalled a phrase from "The Idylls of the King": "By all the sweet and sudden passion of youth, Toward greatness in its elder."

"What is your friend's name, Lance?" Dorothy asked with added gentleness.

Lance had found not all, but a part of what he sought!

Lance shook his head.

"I had rather not tell you. I must ask permission first. Dorothy, I am afraid there is not much chance for me. I'll never learn to be a real musician. I am nearly sixteen and too old."

"Nonsense, Lance McClain!" Tory interrupted, not having taken much part in the conversation until the present moment. "Come on now upstairs with Dorothy and me. We are keeping Mr. Winslow waiting. I shall need your society to give me courage. Afterwards you are to come back with Dorothy and me to our hotel to dinner. I will disappear for a while and you and Dorothy can have a real talk."

CHAPTER IX

A STUDIO TEA

THE following hour was one of the most delightful the two girls and Lance had ever spent.

Overjoyed at meeting so unexpectedly, Lance's reluctance forgotten in the joy of being with his sister and friend, the three of them also came in contact with a new and charming personality and in the midst of a new and beautiful environment.

To Tory Drew an artist's studio was not a new experience. She had lived with her father in several of their own. She had visited with him the studios of many fellow-artists. But to Dorothy and to Lance a studio outside Westhaven was a fresh interest. Although she could say no word aloud, undoubtedly Tory would have agreed that if other studios had been handsomer, never was one more original or charming.

The room was in gray, a cold background with the northern window save for the warmth of the other coloring.

At this hour the winter daylight was closing in and curtains were partly drawn; they were

a curious shade, half rose, half red, and strangely luminous.

On the gray walls were the artist's own pictures.

They were unlike modern work, and perhaps for this reason less popular. In landscapes and in portraiture the tones were richer and darker.

Expecting two of his three guests, Mr. Winslow had prepared for tea.

An enormous lounge, large enough for sleeping and with a high back, was drawn up in front of a meager fire. Wood was expensive in New York City and Philip Winslow an unsuccessful artist.

The small tea table held an array of china with scarcely two pieces alike, yet each one rarely lovely and gathered with care and taste in the years when their owner had studied in France and Italy. There he had won the Prix de Rome. Not in those days did he dream of living on the top floor of a dilapidated house, in a cheap quarter of the greatest of American cities.

The teakettle was boiling. One could hear the hissing behind the oriental curtains that shut off a single corner of the room.

After greeting their new acquaintance and

explaining the reason why they were later than they had planned, Lance, Dorothy and Tory seated themselves upon the great couch. There they sat, silently watching their host until he had vanished into his improvised kitchenette.

They were pursuing almost the same trains of thought.

A man at once younger and older than the girls expected to find him, Philip Winslow had a mass of pale-brown hair, brushed carelessly off a high forehead, eyes darkly brown, with a melancholy expression even when his lips smiled. He was unusually tall, and this may partly have accounted for his appearance of extreme thinness, although neither girl considered this true, for he looked as if he had not long before suffered from a serious illness.

During the hour that followed the three guests found themselves talking to their host with entire freedom as if they had been old friends. Yet Philip Winslow was a shy person, ordinarily talking but little himself. Disappointment at the failure of his work and ill health had altered his original gaiety of spirit.

Indeed, Tory Drew had often heard her father speak of him as one of the leaders in

their old-time artist frolics in the Latin Quarter.

Only once was Tory overawed by her new acquaintance. This was when she shyly offered him her collection of sketches and sat waiting his criticism.

She was on the great sofa facing the now dying fire, while he sat in a small chair opposite, beneath the fading daylight.

For five, ten minutes no one spoke.

The sketches were several bits of outdoor work and two paintings of the little girl, Lucy Martin, who was now Lucy Hammond. Mr. and Mrs. Jeremy Hammond had formally adopted the child who had lived in the Gray House on the Hill, the orphan asylum in the village of Westhaven.

Lucy was oddly picturesque and always Tory had longed to make a portrait of the younger girl since their original meeting. She appreciated, however, that she was too young and untrained for real portraiture. Her efforts were only simple drawings, with a good deal of boldness of color and design. Personally, Tory considered the sketches of Lucy the best things she had ever done and had chosen them for this reason for exhibition.

Certainly Mr. Winslow passed over the

others more rapidly, keeping these in his hands and turning his glance from one to the other. Apparently he was hardly aware now of his guests, although a short time before he had been so courteous and attentive.

During the interval Tory wished *some one* would speak of *something*. Under the circumstances she was not in the position to chatter idly, as if she were not intensely anxious for Mr. Winslow's opinion of her work. But Dorothy or Lance might have talked to each other in low voices without rudeness or interference.

Instead, they pressed close beside each other, Lance's slender hand clutching a fold of his sister's dress, as if he would thus be sure of her presence. Dorothy, without any pretence of hiding her emotion, rarely raised her eyes from her brother's face.

In the midst of her own nervousness Tory felt a regret that was half envy. Who would not desire affection like Dorothy's and her twin brothers'? Tory so often was separated from the people she cared for most. The devoted intimacy with her artist father had been interrupted by his second marriage and his wish that she be brought up among her mother's people and in her own country.

Then the friendship between Katherine Moore and herself! Not altered by Kara's illness—a thousand times no; but assuredly affecting the hours they could spend together and their happiness in each other's society.

Would Mr. Winslow never speak? Was her work so poor that he dreaded telling her the truth for the sake of his old affection for her father, Tory reflected.

Biting her lips, she straightened her shoulders and lifted her chin. If her aunt, Miss Victoria Fenton, had been able to see her at this instant, she would have recognized one of the Fenton characteristics she vainly had looked for in her niece—dignity in meeting defeat.

Naturally pale, Tory was possessed of less color than usual. Her lips, therefore, appeared redder and her wide eyes darker and more wistful. They contradicted the bravery of her attitude.

Sympathetically and encouragingly, Lance tried to sustain her through the last of the ordeal. For the moment forgetting his sister, he reached out to the girl on the other side of him.

He wanted to be able to explain to Tory, to make her realize that she would *succeed*.

She was made for success, even if the present criticism should be unfavorable. She was young and would have the opportunity given her to go on struggling for years and years. Painting was not like music; one did not require to succeed while one was young, one could, if necessary, work many years. For himself Lance was more fearful.

But Tory was not interested in what he might say or think at the present time.

Mr. Winslow was at last speaking, if only to ask a question.

"How long and with whom have you studied?" he inquired, holding up one of the small sketches so that it formed a shield for his face.

"Why, I have never really studied at all," Tory answered. "I mean I have had no regular lessons. I, of course, have had the advantage of hearing a good many clever people talk about art and I have watched my father work and have worked beside him for as long as I can remember. Until this winter father has believed it wiser for me not to study art. He wanted me to learn more of other things first. He was afraid I would lose interest in school and not be properly domestic."

Again Mr. Winslow was silent.

"Is my work so poor? Do you think I had best give up altogether the hope of becoming an artist?" Tory demanded, desperate at last, but at the same time determined she would never give up.

"I am not sure, but I am going to be truthful, Tory. I am disappointed in your work; from what your father had said and written me I had expected more."

The hand that had sheltered his face dropped to his lap and Tory was angry and touched by the artist's expression. He seemed so very sorry for what he was saying and yet felt obliged to speak.

Making a sudden movement as if she would rescue her despised sketches, Tory felt her hand seized and herself drawn up to stand beside the artist.

Endeavoring to smile gallantly, she was meeting with little success.

"My dear child, you have misunderstood me. I don't know how to make myself clear to young people, nor to old ones for that matter. I am far from intending to say you have no talent. I think you have talent, although I would not have you trust my judgment altogether. What I meant was that I was surprised you do not know more of the tech-

nical side of your work with so successful an artist as your father is. You have originality, but you draw badly and your coloring is—oh, well, you see I do not agree with other artists, so perhaps you are right and I am wrong. I don't see why your father sent you to me for my opinion. There are a dozen other better men he might have asked."

Within the last few moments Tory Drew had gone through a process of enlightenment with regard to the character of her new acquaintance. No longer was she so deeply discouraged or unable to express herself. She knew him to be intensely critical both of his own work and of other people's, deeply sensitive and yet compelled to tell the truth as he saw it, whether it would hurt himself or others.

"Do you think I could learn to draw, learn to see color differently and to paint it?" Tory asked with the little charming half-shy, half-friendly manner to which most persons yielded.

Philip Winslow frowned.

"I would like to have you study with me a few years and afterwards go to some one I recommend, if you would work. But you won't. You are a girl and girls don't work, not really. But why should you? You know what my work has brought me: poverty and

but few friends, no recognition. You need not work half so hard and will have better fortune with any other teacher."

Unexpectedly and light-heartedly Tory laughed.

Her two companions, Dorothy and Lance, stared at her in surprise and in consternation. Ordinarily Tory possessed beautiful manners which the other young people in Westhaven admired and oftentimes envied. Yet it was not polite of Tory to laugh either in the face of Mr. Winslow's criticism or his bitterness with regard to himself.

"I beg your pardon," she added an instant later. "I was only thinking. Father told me you would say pretty much what you have said. If only you would agree to teach me some day I must not mind anything else. I don't believe your work is so unpopular as you say it is. It is only that you are not well and you are impatient and angry with people when they don't see things as you do. You know you really ought to be a Girl Scout."

Tory flushed.

"I suppose you will think I am rude. I am afraid I was really. Only you seem to feel as I did when I came to Westhaven to live last winter and thought no one understood

or liked me. When I became a Scout I saw things differently."

Mr. Winslow did not appear offended by Tory's odd speeches.

Don was right, Lance McClain thought, Tory Drew had a character of attraction no one of her Troop of Girl Scouts possessed, except of course their own sister, Dorothy. Dorothy was altogether different. Lance knew that he was sufficiently like Tory in some characteristics to understand her better than his brother or sister. They were alike; they could admire or be angry with her, they would not always understand her.

"Look here, Miss Victoria Drew, how old are you?" Mr. Winslow asked abruptly. He did not appear offended, however, merely amused. "I have been talking to you as if you were a grown woman and now you inform me I should follow your example and become a Girl Scout. Offer me advice that is a little less impossible! Besides, what or who is a Girl Scout?"

Tory shook her head. Her hair under a small blue velvet hat looked an especially bright red-gold.

"I am nearly fifteen. It would require too long a time to tell you what it means to be a

Girl Scout. Perhaps there were no Boy Scouts when you were young enough to join their organization. If only you would come to Westhaven I should like you to meet our Patrol of the Eagle's Wing Troop. Besides, it would do you good. Won't you come? The country is beautiful with its white covering of snow. My aunt, Miss Victoria Fenton, is a wonderful housekeeper and you and Uncle Richard would be sure to like each other. Besides, there is our Troop Captain, Sheila Mason. I wish some day you might know her and paint her portrait. She is lovely, but altogether unlike the portraits you have done."

Tory glanced not very admiringly at the heads of men and women adorning the artist's gray walls. His models had assuredly not been chosen for their beauty.

This time Mr. Winslow returned Tory's laughter with emphasis.

She had divined that he was lonely and disillusioned and that, as in most cases, the fault was as much his own as his world's.

"Fifteen, and I have been talking to you as if you were a woman! I suppose I had forgotten what your father wrote. In any case I might have known by looking at you. I

don't often pay visits, but if your aunt and uncle would like to have me at any time, perhaps I'll come and look over other drawings you have done and tell you how poor they are. You are too young for anything but your three 'R's' at present. But we might have a few lessons for the sake of the good time we would have and because your father has been kinder to me than he would be willing to let other people know."

At a signal from Tory, Dorothy and Lance had arisen. The three of them were preparing to leave, aware of having remained longer than they should. Outside, the winter twilight had almost completely closed in.

Lighting a pair of candles, Mr. Winslow turned to Dorothy and Lance, fearing that he had not shown sufficient attention to his other visitors in his interest in his old friend's daughter.

He admired Dorothy McClain's appearance, her tall, upright figure, with the broad shoulders and slender hips, the clear, fresh skin and straightforward blue eyes. An instant he considered that so a Greek girl might have appeared in the days of the great Greek sculptors. Then inwardly he denied his own thought. Dorothy McClain was a typical American girl.

Turning toward Lance, he put out his hand for a second time.

"I did not recognize you at first. I believe we have seen each other before, here in this very house. Do you live here?"

Lance shook his head.

"No, I come here now and then. I have a friend in one of the other studios who allows me the use of his piano."

"Do you mean the rich fellow named Moore, who won't have anything to do with the rest of us in this building?"

Lance stiffened.

"I know nothing of Mr. Moore's private affairs."

A little later, when they had said farewell and gone, Dorothy and Tory both appreciated that they had learned the name of Lance's friend which he had declined to tell them without permission. It was of no importance. Moore was not an uncommon name. As a matter of fact, it was possibly bestowed upon Kara because it was so ordinary a name, when she had been deserted as a baby in the ever-green cabin.

CHAPTER X

REACTION

INEVITABLY Tory suffered an intense reaction after the excitement of the Christmas holidays and her visit to New York.

School appeared insufferably dull; life at home was rather worse than better. After learning to bear with each other more amiably, again Tory and her aunt, Miss Victoria Fenton, felt their personalities jarring at nearly every point of contact.

Without hesitation Miss Victoria expressed her state of mind toward her niece. In the past year she had agreed that Tory showed marked improvement in character and personal habits. She had revealed a deeper interest in her school work and the acquiring of friends in Westhaven. She had lost her critical attitude toward what she considered the conservative and old-fashioned views of the little New England village. Her enthusiasm over becoming a Girl Scout and desire to maintain a good standing had stimulated

her to a greater degree of acquiescence in Miss Fenton's earnest effort to teach her the first principles of good housekeeping.

Best of all, Tory had ceased to talk everlastingly of painting and her life abroad with her father! She seemed really to intend to become an American girl in the best sense of the word. This had been her father's wish in sending her to live in the United States. Since for once, and the only time she could recall, her opinion had coincided with her brother-in-law's, Miss Victoria Fenton had spared neither advice nor reproach.

Now when Tory had given her every right to feel encouraged, Miss Fenton declared that the younger Victoria was returning to her former waywardness and a measure of her original discontent.

The call upon the New York artist had been against Miss Victoria's better judgment. Now and then, Tory, without saying anything aloud, felt herself agreeing with her aunt.

The daily routine of school did appear more trying than at any time since her arrival in Westhaven after the first discouraging and friendless weeks were gone. Later the Girl Scouts and her new friendships had stimulated and helped her. She had learned to love

Memory Frean and her House in the Woods. She had become devoted to Katherine Moore, who was then living at the orphan asylum known in Westhaven as the Gray House on the Hill.

The weekly meetings of the Girl Scouts were a continuous joy. All through the seven days she had gone at her tasks with the singing thought that whatever was worth while would bring her nearer to the honors she desired to attain in the Girl Scout organization.

Since the close of the holidays occasionally Tory appreciated that she was asking herself if even the Girl Scouts filled the place in her life they formerly had?

She would not reply even to herself, ashamed of her disloyalty and lack of perseverance.

The visit in New York City in a way had altered her intimacy with Dorothy McClain, and she had depended upon Dorothy, now that Kara must be indefinitely in a hospital.

Of course there was no question that she and Kara cherished a deeper affection for each other and that Dorothy and Louise Miller were older and closer friends. This had not affected her own and Dorothy's relation.

She was more of a family friend than Louise Miller was ever apt to be. Dr. McClain insisted that he cared for her next to his own daughter. Don was always her admirer and champion, and did not particularly understand or like Louise. She and Lance quarreled now and then, but appreciated that this was partly because they had so many traits in common they could never thoroughly approve of each other. They enjoyed being together and arguing oftentimes more than a friendly calm. Besides, Dorothy's four other brothers, from the oldest to the youngest, had in a measure adopted Tory as one of themselves. They appreciated the fact that she was a stranger in Westhaven until the year before and being brought up in the somewhat difficult home atmosphere of an old maid aunt and bachelor uncle. She needed the warmth and happy-go-lucky comradeship that they could offer.

But of late Tory believed Dorothy cared to be with her less frequently. She was not disagreeable, Dorothy's sweet nature and straightforwardness never permitted her to be really unkind to any human being. She was listless, however, and indifferent, and Tory received the impression that she was not

interested in anything she might wish to discuss.

Oddly, the other Girl Scouts were less attractive than usual. One by one Tory paid them visits during the afternoons following the Christmas holidays, and found them unsatisfying.

She went out into the House in the Woods upon an especially disagreeable January afternoon of thaw and cold winds. Memory Frean listened to her protests, but was more critical than sympathetic.

Moreover, Tory had not to the same degree the refuge of her uncle's companionship. He was busier than in the early months after her arrival to live in his home. He still spent the greater portion of his time in the library, but he was then reading. Now he was engaged in writing a book. Naturally, under the circumstances Tory felt herself less free to interrupt him, although he was always cordial and interested in whatever she might want to talk about.

Nevertheless, Tory herself became aware that the renewal of his former friendship with Memory Frean had influenced Mr. Fenton. He was more interested in outside things and people. He was even attending the meetings

in the Town Hall to discuss questions of village improvement and being constantly called upon for his opinion and advice.

Since his rescue of Miss Frean he had fallen into the habit of paying weekly visits to the little House in the Woods.

So Tory concluded she must bear her difficulties alone. She would not talk to Sheila Mason. Above all other persons, she did not wish the Troop Captain to dream that she was not feeling the same degree of pleasure and interest in the Girl Scouts.

One consolation she did have. She wrote a letter to her new artist acquaintance, Mr. Philip Winslow, and received a delightful one in return, although even this letter was not wholly satisfactory.

In it he expressed the desire that she forget the half of their talk together; apologized for not having appreciated her youth, and hoped she would not consider the idea of becoming an artist for the next three years at least. A good education, he insisted, was the best foundation for any career she might pursue. He agreed to come to see her some day in Westhaven, and with this Tory endeavored to be content.

Added to everything else, Kara explained

that Mr. Jeremy Hammond had answered the eccentric advertisement he had read in the newspaper. Apparently he must have considered it of no importance, for he had gone away from town on business without coming to see her. Lucy and Mrs. Hammond had called, and Lucy was prettier than ever.

A postscript in Kara's letter added that she was finding it more difficult to be brave, now she no longer had the anticipation of Tory's and Dorothy's visit to New York in prospect. The two girls had seen her every day during their stay in town. She begged Tory to write her everything that was said and done at the Scout meetings, since nothing else afforded her the same pleasure and encouragement.

The weekly meeting that would occur the last week in January Tory arranged to have at her own home. The weather would not allow them to have the regulation drill, but if they wished they could go through exercises in the old drawing-room and have their Round Table in the dining-room later. Sheila Mason was suffering from a cold, so it was possible that she might not be able to be present. In that case the Patrol Leader would take charge.

During the early hours of Friday afternoon

Tory was glad to make the necessary preparations. She had undergone a disagreeable morning at school. Her mathematics teacher, whom she never had been able to like, reprimanded her publicly, protesting that she pay more attention to what was going on around her and less to her own dreams.

At luncheon Miss Victoria added to her annoyance. She argued that if Tory wished to entertain her Patrol at tea after their regular meeting, she should have made the cake and sandwiches herself and not asked Sarah, their maid. Sarah had proposed it and knew herself to be the better cook. Tory considered her aunt's criticism altogether uncalled for, and said so. She had not intended to be impolite, but Mr. Fenton had frowned and Tory had not enjoyed his reproving look.

She was moving the furniture about in the drawing-room immediately after lunch with a degree of energy that was a relief to the spirit. The heavy chairs had to be pushed back against the walls, the cherished ornaments put in safe places. The Girl Scouts had agreed to practice flag signaling from the different ends of the long room. They were growing rusty in this feature of their Scout training.

Occasionally Tory stopped to get her breath

or to change the arrangement of some detail of the room. Instead of disliking the old drawing-room as she had upon her arrival at her mother's girlhood home, Tory had become deeply attached to it. She admired the rich brown and gold of the paper, the dark wood panelings, even the stately, stiff portraits of her Fenton ancestors.

Several of the Girl Scouts had promised to come in early and help her make ready the room for their Scout meeting. In her present state of mind Tory did not regret their delay.

She had nearly finished when Dorothy McClain opened the door and entered.

"Sorry not to have been able to get here sooner," Dorothy began, "but I am in such a bad humor. I know you cannot fail to be glad you have not had to endure my society. I was waiting for Louise Miller and at the last moment Louise called up to say she would be late. Her mother had detained her for some reason.

"I wonder, Tory, if you have noticed a change in Louise since the Christmas holidays? I have sometimes thought perhaps she believed you and I were becoming too intimate and that she was left out. It would be foolish of her; nothing could alter my feeling for

Louise, no matter how much I might care for you. But Louise is so absorbed in study and growing more silent and self-contained. I know she does not approve of me or love me as she used to, and it makes me very unhappy. She insists I am wrong to continue worrying over Lance when he is doing what he wishes. How can I help it when father still refuses to talk about him except to ask if he is well? Lance writes me nothing more of his affairs than we found out from him in town. He is at work and has a friend named Moore who is helping him with his music."

In one of the chairs stored away in a dark recess of the room, Dorothy dropped down, resting her bright chestnut hair against the dark leather. She looked so dispirited and so unlike the gallant, cheerful Dorothy that Tory went to her.

"Dorothy, don't tell me you are suffering from the blues! You must not; you will depress all your family. You may not realize it, but they are dependent upon you as the only girl in the family, and more so than ever now that Lance is away. Lance was spoiled and sometimes selfish, but you know he has a delightful sense of humor and imagination.

"As for Louise, she adores you. I wonder if she is not troubled about something she does not think she ought to confide to you or any one of the Girl Scouts? I confess I have noticed that Louise has been quieter since the night of our Christmas Eve party."

There was no chance for a further confidence, as Tory flew to answer a timid knock on the door left half ajar.

Immediately she opened it wider, Louise Miller came into the room.

Her face was flushed and there were circles about her light gray eyes with their curiously dark lashes. She was panting as if out of breath.

She almost ignored Tory.

"Dorothy, I found I could get here sooner than I thought, and I want to apologize to you for having kept you waiting and then failing to explain over the telephone. Mother and I were talking over something and she suddenly announced she did not wish me to come to the Scout meeting. I was to stay at home and help with some sewing for the younger children. Finally I induced her to let me bring the work here. Mother seems to feel I have no right to be a Girl Scout these days! I am growing so much more stupid and

self-centered and uninterested in my household duties. If only I were more like you and Tory, Dorothy! I never see you in this old room, Tory, without thinking what a picture you make, especially in your Girl Scout costume. Forgive my not speaking to you when I came in, I was thinking only of Dorothy."

Tory laughed good naturedly.

"You nearly always are thinking of Dorothy, aren't you, Ouida?—so I forgive you. Yet Dorothy believes you do not care for her as you once did, now when she specially needs you because of Lance."

In one of her rare outbursts of affection Louise clasped her arms about her friend.

"Dorothy, if you only knew how much I do care! Still I realize I have behaved strangely of late, ever since the holidays. There is something I must tell you, only I cannot just now."

Through the open door the three girls beheld Teresa Peterson approaching. Teresa's cheeks were a deeper rose, her dusky hair less neat than she ordinarily arranged it. Her lips and eyes were mutinous.

She dropped down on a stool.

"Well, I am glad we are to have a Scout meeting this afternoon. Certainly I need

something to reform my disposition! Ever since Christmas things have been so dull and horrid."

The outburst of laughter from her companions annoyed but did not surprise Teresa. She was accustomed to their behaving in an incomprehensible fashion on many occasions, and seldom troubled to understand.

At present she had no opportunity.

Through the window she could observe Margaret Hale, Joan Peters and the English Girl Guide, Martha Greaves, who was boarding with Joan's mother, coming toward the house. Even to Teresa's not overactive imagination it was evident that they had been disagreeing. They were not speaking and each girl held herself erect with her chin slightly elevated.

Afterwards Edith Linder appeared, a little aggrieved because Evan Philips had promised to call for her and had forgotten the engagement.

CHAPTER XI

A ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

THE table in the Fenton dining-room had been arranged to form a perfect circle with the addition of several table leaves.

Above the table were the flags of the Eagle's Wing Troop and the American flag.

Stacked in a corner of the room were the banners made of silver cloth.

The arm chair was empty, but the eight others were occupied by the Girl Scouts in their regulation uniforms.

Joan Peters, the new Patrol Leader, in the absence of the Captain, was presiding.

She was a tall, slender girl with light-brown hair and eyes of almost the same shade. Her features were regular and delicately cut. She possessed a poise of manner and a seriousness unusual in so young a person. Joan was an only child and her mother a semi-invalid. Her father, an inventor, had made no practical success with any of his inventions, so that Joan was forced through circumstances to become the practical member of her family.

She was leaning forward now over the round table, her eyes traveling slowly from one face to the other, faces that either returned her gaze or revealed downcast eyes.

In the old room there was a momentary silence in spite of the presence of so many girls.

"I agree with Tory. It is absolutely necessary that we do *something* right away," Joan remarked slowly.

Louise Miller appeared impatient.

"Yes, but what? I know it has been good for all our souls to confess that we have fallen into the slough of despond. Assuredly we are upon the downward grade! I don't know how to express it! Having made the confession, what is to happen next? I have realized ever since Christmas that I was not living up to our Girl Scout principles, as I tried so hard to in the beginning. At first we had the excitement of organizing and of struggling to earn our first merit badges, of ceasing to be mere tenderfeet. Then followed our wonderful summer in Beechwood Forest! Never have I been so happy anywhere on earth! I am sure my whole life will be influenced by it!

"When I came back home in the early fall I remember making the noblest resolutions.

I was going to work harder at school, not in the subjects I care for most, but in those that have never interested me. I was going to be more helpful at home. My family would scarcely believe that I acquired a badge for cooking over a camp fire last summer. I intended to forget that I am more thrilled by birds and insects and trees and stones than by making beds and dusting the parlor and sewing on buttons. In truth, I really gave such a good imitation of doing what I should, that my family, who were not enthusiastic about the Girl Scouts at first, were beginning to be impressed.

"Just before Christmas time I discovered myself slipping into my old indifference and awkwardness.

"Mother declares I have become impossible now. So what shall I do? We might take up each individual case one at a time. I am sure I am the most hopeless of our Troop, so begin with me. I never have felt I had the same right the rest of you have to membership."

There was no mistaking the fact that Louise was deeply in earnest. She possessed little self-esteem, scarcely a sufficient amount. Her own lack of beauty and charm of manner, her slow, oftentimes clumsy movements,

her inability to speak or think quickly, had always given her the consciousness that she was less attractive than other girls. And unfortunately for Louise, her own mother in a measure agreed with this opinion. She herself was pretty, graceful and fond of society.

One person had struggled to influence Louise's unfortunate estimate of herself, her closest friend, Dorothy McClain.

Having finished her speech, Louise was leaning over, resting her head upon her hand, appearing more discouraged than the other girls considered necessary under the circumstances.

Louise's features were large, her complexion pallid; she had only two claims to beauty, her curious light-gray eyes and copper-red hair. Ordinarily she wore unsuitable clothes, so that she looked better in her Scout uniform than in other costumes.

"Nonsense, Ouida, we are not going at things in any such spirit!" Dorothy remarked with the good sense and directness that distinguished her.

Teresa Peterson looked relieved.

She and Louise were not congenial; it was impossible they should be with such totally different temperaments.

Teresa was exceptionally pretty and pleasure loving. She could see nothing to admire in Louise's appearance or in her serious disposition. Her philosophy of life, although Teresa would never have appreciated that she possessed a philosophy, and would have disliked the name, was never to trouble so long as it was possible to enjoy oneself. She had pretty, soft manners and was gentle and affectionate, save when any one opposed a strong desire on her part.

If the Girl Scouts realized that Teresa was unlike the rest of them, they perhaps expected less of her. Several of the older girls, particularly Joan Peters, had a special affection for Teresa and a wish to shelter her from criticism or difficulty.

"I cannot see why it is our fault that we have been bored and cross since Christmas," she now remarked plaintively. "How can we expect anything else after the lovely times we had then, the dances and sleigh rides and skating party and the queer Christmas Eve entertainment at Miss Frean's when we were made Knights of something or other and recited all sorts of funny poetry?"

Perhaps the laughter following Teresa's speech was better for the group of Girl Scouts than Louise's introspection.

"I don't wonder you say 'Knights of something or other'," Tory added. "When I saw Kara in New York she was not in the least enthusiastic over our Knighthood. I quoted Mrs. Browning's poem: 'The world's male chivalry has vanished quite, but women are knight-errants to the last.' Kara thought the idea too fanciful, as she does most of my cherished suggestions. I told her we simply wished to have an original entertainment and to hold our indoor Scout meetings this winter about a Round Table. Nevertheless, I do remember that I was chosen to represent Sir Galahad, the Knight who went in quest of the Holy Grail. Because his life was purer than any other of the Knights he was allowed to behold the Grail."

The speaker lowered her voice and her eyelids drooped over her dark eyes, as if she were ashamed to go on with what she was struggling to say.

"I might as well confess I have wondered what the Quest of the Holy Grail may mean in one's ordinary, everyday life? I suppose it is not so unlike what we are told to do in our Girl Scout work, do good to others and follow the best that is in each of us."

The girl's glance traveled from the flags

above the round table to the pile of banners in the far corner of the old room.

"Yes, Tory, what is it that you wish to tell us? You have something to propose. Somehow we always expect you to inspire us when we need a new incentive," Margaret Hale said encouragingly.

Still the other girl hesitated.

"I don't believe I ought to suggest anything. I had not an idea to propose when we started our Round Table discussion. I was in such a bad humor before you girls arrived, I thought everybody and everything responsible except me. Then Dorothy and I fell to talking and discovered we were in the same state of mind, afterwards Louise, and then one by one each member of our Patrol. It was funny! Still, I cannot help being sorry. Not one of our knightly banners is emblazoned with any sign of a service we have rendered to any human being since Christmas. Worse, I for one am failing always to do the daily good turn I promised in our Girl Scout pledge."

"Go on, Tory, we have agreed we are in the same state of mind and have been making the same mistakes," Edith Linder protested.

The other girl nodded.

"Very well. Please remember that whether

you agree with me or not, for once in my life I intend to be simple and practical in my suggestion. And I want you to write and tell Kara.

"As we have been sitting here this afternoon the same idea has occurred to each one of us. Our trouble is that we have been thinking of ourselves. The only cure is to think of some one else. I have not Kara any longer to care for and that makes a big difference with me. But there must be some one else in Westhaven. So I propose that this week each one of us finds some one who is ill and needing help of some character. It does not matter whether the person is a member of our own family or a stranger, rich or poor, young or old, we must manage to make them more comfortable. Then at our next Scout meeting we can report to one another. Don't you think this may be worth while? I am not pretending to be very original this afternoon."

"It is not important *always* to be original, Tory," Margaret Hale declared, in a voice and manner that always influenced her companions.

"I propose that we vote on your suggestion. It might be more inspiring if we try to find people who are especially in need of help.

If they are willing, we could tell of what they have suffered. This might prove as interesting and exciting as reading thrilling stories."

In the vote that followed no voice dissented.

Only Teresa sighed and exclaimed:

"I believe I shall choose Miss Mason! She is our Scout Captain and sent word to Tory that she was too ill to be with us this afternoon. Of course she only has a bad cold, but she may grow worse. Besides, I dearly love going to her house and sitting in her pretty room. I wish I were grown and our house not so filled with ugly things. Living in Miss Mason's room, curled up on her blue couch with the yellow and blue cushions, would give me a lovely disposition," Teresa concluded.

Tory shook her head.

"Good gracious, Teresa dear, I am afraid if our Troop Captain continues ill she will suffer from too much attention! I don't think you really have grasped our idea. But for goodness' sake let us stop being so serious! If we are through with our Scout meeting, suppose you come and help me bring in tea, Teresa."

CHAPTER XII

UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITIES

THE days following Tory Drew's suggestion to the Girl Scouts brought forth an unusual chain of circumstances. Otherwise their good resolutions might not have had the surprising developments.

A day or two later Tory received a letter which filled her with surprise, pleasure and consternation. The letter was the second from her new artist friend in New York City, but of a wholly different character from the original one.

Mr. Winslow explained that he had not been well in some time. Recently his physician had insisted that he spend the winter in the country. He knew of few places outside New York City, but recalled Tory's description of Westhaven. Would it be possible to find him a little house in or near Westhaven where he might spend the winter? He must be a large part of the time out of doors. Tory would please understand that he could afford to pay but little and would ask only the simplest living arrangements.

The letter Tory showed first to her uncle and then to Memory Freat.

Neither had any suggestion to make that Tory believed would be acceptable to the gifted but disappointed artist, who was her father's friend, and who, perhaps, some day would be her teacher as well as friend.

Mr. Fenton could only propose vaguely that the artist might spend the winter with them, if his sister, Miss Victoria, were willing.

Tory appreciated that her aunt might be glad to entertain an unknown guest for a week or ten days. She could hardly be expected to desire one for an indefinite stay.

Moreover, Mr. Winslow would never consider the proposal. He had no wish to be a burden.

Memory Freat, for the first time in their acquaintance, had no suggestion to offer.

Fortunately, Dorothy McClain was almost equally as interested as Tory in their recent acquaintance. In accordance with her advice, they concluded to consult with their Troop Captain, Sheila Mason.

Miss Mason was not well enough to be outdoors, but, contrary to Teresa's Good Samaritan intentions, was a great deal better, and able to see visitors in her own room.

The two girls found her in a lovely morning dress of gold and blue seated in a large chair before a fire.

As Teresa had insisted upon adopting the Scout Captain as *her* invalid, notwithstanding her recovery, at the moment of Tory's and Dorothy's arrival they discovered Teresa curled up on the blue sofa with the yellow cushions, according to her expressed desire.

Sheila Mason was an only daughter. Her family was considered a wealthy one, according to the standards of Westhaven. She was only a few years older than her own Troop of Girl Scouts, being in the early twenties.

This afternoon Tory dropped down on a stool at her feet, while Dorothy seated herself upon the divan beside Teresa.

"There seems to be no little house for rent in Westhaven that is inexpensive," Dorothy remarked, when Tory had concluded her story. "We have made any number of inquiries. And I feel sure Mr. Winslow is poorer than he would be willing to confess. He says he must sublet his studio to be able to leave New York at all. At the same time I consider it would be best for him and a wonderful thing for Westhaven to have him spend the winter here. He is sure to make friends. Tory and

I are convinced he is very gifted and that it is only because of some disappointment, a love affair perhaps, that he so far has failed to meet the success he deserves."

Sheila Mason laughed. How unlike Dorothy to be so romantic! She would have expected such a speech from Tory.

Then Sheila set herself seriously to considering their problem, wrinkling her brows and biting her lips. The three girls continued to gaze at her admiringly.

Her fair, pale-gold hair was piled loosely on top of her small head. Her eyes were dark blue with thin level brows. Except for the gravity of her expression she might have been almost too pretty.

Suddenly she made a movement.

"Girls, I have thought of something! Suppose we ask this Mr. Winslow if he would like to occupy our evergreen cottage in the woods this winter. I am sure the little place can be made comfortable for him, and from what you tell me Mr. Winslow is not a conventional person. He can rest out there and paint our beechwoods in the winter time whenever he likes or is well enough. Of course we must ask the permission of our other Girl Scouts.

"After Mr. Hammond had the floor of our

cabin removed to search for a clew to Katherine Moore's history, he had a better floor relaid to take the place of the old one, and the holes in the walls stopped with plaster.

"I for one shall envy this artist person if he occupies our cabin during the winter. I too have missed our good times out there and since Christmas have worried over our failure to live up to our Scout ideals."

Flushing, the young Scout Captain clasped her hands over her knees and began slowly rocking back and forth in an unconscious and girlish fashion.

"I had about reached the conclusion, girls, that our mistake lately has been that we have thought too much of our own happiness and self-development. It is part of the Scout ideal, but certainly not the whole. Our slogan is sufficient proof, the daily good turn is for others."

The Scout Captain turned to Tory.

"Teresa has just told me of your suggestion; each one of us is to find an ill person and care for him or her during the winter. If your artist comes to the evergreen house, Tory, you may look after him. Perhaps we may be envious of you. As soon as I am well I too shall seek out some one to aid. This is a hard winter for many people. The Girl Scouts

ought to make themselves an influence for good in Westhaven as never before."

A little later, on their way home, Tory and Dorothy McClain could think and talk of nothing but the possibility of their artist's spending the winter months in their evergreen house in the beechwoods.

They had adopted Mr. Winslow to the extent of speaking of him as "their artist" to each other.

Small doubt in either girl's mind that the other Scouts in their Troop would agree to the Troop Captain's suggestion!

If Mr. Winslow accepted their invitation, Dorothy and Tory decided to do everything in their power to make his stay in Westhaven a success. They would omit no detail. He should not be bored by their attentions, but never allowed to feel neglected.

"Suppose he should meet some one in Westhaven who would console him for what he must have suffered in the past?" Dorothy suggested.

In amazement Tory stared at her and smiled.

She was as surprised as their Troop Captain by Dorothy's unexpected romantic attitude. Of all her friends Dorothy was less given to vicarious romanticism. Most of the girls

indulged in dreams for themselves and their friends. Dorothy was as matter-of-fact as many boys. Her own family and friends and the daily routine of life so far satisfied her.

But Mr. Winslow had touched her imagination as well as Tory's. The truth was that Lance's absence from home left a vacant place in Dorothy's life which she had not known he had so completely filled.

She and Donald confessed to each other that always they had had Lance upon their minds without appreciating the fact. He was so often in trouble with some one, or not well, or proposing some impossible suggestion out of which he had to be argued or bullied.

Realizing Dorothy's need, Tory decided to be generous. She would have preferred Mr. Winslow to be principally known as her friend upon his arrival. In reality, she had the chief claim upon him. Still, after all it might be pleasanter if she and Dorothy shared the pleasure.

Neither girl apparently doubted the artist's acceptance of their suggestion. They were right in their surmise. Before another week he might be expected. The evergreen cottage appeared to be the one place in the world most suited to his needs.

The arrangements to make it habitable for the winter Dorothy and Tory gladly undertook. Mr. Winslow insisted upon paying a small rental. Miss Virginia Fenton agreed to allow Tory to use any old furniture she might find stored away in the attic of their house.

An entire afternoon she and Dorothy spent in fascinated search. They discovered a battered but beautiful mahogany table, two chairs slightly uncertain in their legs, but otherwise whole. However, the cabin was well supplied with tables and chairs. The treasure that pleased them most was a worn pair of dark blue and gold damask curtains. Drawn across the windows they would make the cabin room safe from the cold and full of beautiful color. They were, of course, too long and too large for the cabin windows, so that odd pieces were cut off for table covers and scarfs.

A piece of oriental embroidery, brought home by one of her early seafaring Fenton ancestors, Tory hung on the cabin wall to break the monotony of the exterior. She hoped Mr. Winslow would bring a certain number of pictures with him, not only to beautify the cabin but to give the people in Westhaven a knowledge of his ability.

If not, Dorothy suggested he would soon have new pictures of the woods and scenes about Westhaven.

Indeed, the two girls became so interested in their work and in their anticipations they saw nothing of the other Girl Scouts in their Patrol for the entire week.

What they were doing to carry out Tory's suggestion at the last Scout meeting they neither knew nor for the time felt any special interest. The next Scout meeting was to be delayed until the Troop Captain was well enough to be present.

Suddenly Tory Drew found herself having to face the entire responsibility of Mr. Winslow's arrival and installation at the evergreen cottage alone.

It was nearly bedtime and she was beginning to make ready to undress when she heard Donald McClain's familiar whistle beneath her window.

Tory fled down to the front door, calling to Mr. Fenton, who was in his library, to explain why she had reappeared after saying good-night.

Don would only come in for a few moments. He brought a message from Dorothy saying that her father had received a telegram asking him to come to New York City at once.

The telegram was signed Owen Moore. Lance at last had agreed they might learn the name of the man who had befriended them. He had told them nothing of his history, insisting that he himself was in complete ignorance. Mr. Moore did not seem to care to talk of his own past.

Naturally, Dr. McClain believed that Lance had been taken seriously ill. He did not wish to face the situation alone and was taking Dorothy with him.

Tory received permission to spend a quarter of an hour with Dorothy and the doctor in order to say good-by and to send a dozen messages through them to Kara.

Her own anxiety over the mysterious summons and its possible reference to Lance, she did her best to conceal.

CHAPTER XIII

OTHER EXPERIENCES

DURING the past week Tory and Dorothy had been making happy preparations for the arrival of Mr. Winslow at the evergreen cabin. They had secured the consent of the other girls without difficulty. In the meantime several of the Girl Scouts had been puzzled by the effort to keep the Scout pledge made to one another at their final meeting.

Of necessity, in the village there must be a number of persons who were ill and would like to be cared for, provided the attentions were tactfully offered. How to discover the persons specially in need of sympathy and aid was not so simple an undertaking. Most ill persons had their own families and friends. Outside attention was scarcely necessary.

One afternoon, under the impression that she had not fulfilled her own duty in the matter, Margaret Hale decided that she would make a call upon Edith Linder and ask her advice. Edith lived in a poorer quarter of Westhaven among the foreign element, many

of whom worked in the factories. To her own embarrassment, Margaret appreciated that she had never been to call upon Edith before. In the days when Edith had spent the winter at Memory Frean's cottage she had gone frequently to inquire for her. Indeed, she had been one of her advocates when Tory Drew insisted that Edith was not the type of girl to make a successful eighth member of their Patrol. Later Tory had completely changed her viewpoint. Nevertheless, Margaret realized that since her return to live with her own family, she had relied upon seeing Edith at their regular Scout meetings and had made no effort to see her at her own home.

This had not been deliberate. Margaret was too well-bred herself to consider the social inferiority of a girl whom she liked as a personal friend, and was a member of her Girl Scout Patrol. The truth was that she had not thought of their possessing any special interests in common outside their Scout work until this afternoon. Now it occurred to her that Edith might put her in touch with persons who really were more in need of help than her own acquaintances.

She would stop and ask Louise Miller to accompany her. Rarely did she call upon

Louise! They had a special regard for each other, but with her school work, her Scout work, music lessons, reading and the desire to be with her own family whenever it was possible, Margaret could reasonably plead the excuse of not having time for visiting. Moreover, Louise was nearly always with Dorothy McClain when she had the leisure. At present Dorothy and Tory Drew seemed more often in one another's society, so it occurred to Margaret that Louise might not only be more free, but glad to be reminded of the affection and admiration she felt for her.

It was true that Margaret Hale possessed a deep regard and appreciation of Louise, in spite of the other girl's clumsiness and lack of social gifts in contrast to her own graceful manner and appearance.

Margaret knew that their circumstances had been altogether different. Her own father was wealthy and prominent and devoted to his family, her mother cultivated and charming. They both had done everything in their power to make their home atmosphere beautiful and serene. Margaret never remembered anything but sympathy and affection and understanding surrounding herself and her two younger sisters. They had everything

they could possibly wish, money, position; put into concrete terms, they owned a lovely home, not one but two motor cars, the services of three or four maids, a gardener and a chauffeur.

Yet no one could be less spoiled than Margaret or more unselfish; a part of this was her own nature, another part her mother's thoughtful training.

Personally Margaret felt humble in the depth of her sincere and beautiful nature. Her possessions she realized were not herself nor due to her own accomplishments. Individually she believed herself less clever and less gifted than most of the girls in her own Patrol.

Louise Miller possessed none of her material and spiritual advantages. She was poor and not congenial with her own family, yet Margaret believed had a stronger nature and rarer talents than she expected to possess.

This afternoon the small space in front of Louise's home looked especially barren and ugly. Two small boys were fighting. They stopped at Margaret's approach, more interested in her than in battle.

After ringing the front door bell Margaret thought she heard a querulous voice in the hall,

fretfully scolding some one. She could not be sure who it was until Mrs. Miller herself opened the front door, appearing tired and dispirited.

At the sight of the visitor her face brightened. She asked her in the parlor without mentioning her arrival to Louise.

Margaret was annoyed. She had not come to call upon Mrs. Miller and was not interested in what she was saying, although she thought her pretty in a faded fashion.

When Louise's strong, almost ugly face appeared at the open door, Margaret thought her handsomer than her mother, so important was her undoubted strength of character.

As a matter of principle Mrs. Miller always objected to Louise's going away from home in search of amusement. This afternoon on Margaret's account she did not protest seriously. She preferred Margaret to Dorothy McClain as Louise's friend, for one reason because Louise was not so absorbed in Margaret. Another, because Mr. Hale possessed greater wealth than Dr. McClain.

Slowly Margaret and Louise walked on toward an entirely different quarter of the village. Louise confessed that she had been so busy at home during the past week that she

had no time for outside work. The younger children had been suffering from colds and been difficult. She had been trying to keep them amused to spare her mother as much as possible.

Apparently Louise did not consider that she had thus accomplished her Scout duty. Margaret insisted upon it, and tried to induce Louise to appreciate the fact.

By and by the girls talked no more of themselves or of their Scouting in their interest in the unfamiliar surroundings.

Most of the cottages in the factory district were new and clean. Near the large factory buildings the dilapidated tenement houses looked gray and battered.

The girls knew Edith's street and house number and were glad to discover that her home was one of the new cottages.

The yard was larger and more attractive than Louise's.

In the small space a garden half of vegetables, half flowers, flourished in the summer time; now with the winter the yard revealed only a few hardy shrubs and several small fruit trees with bare, thin branches.

Edith herself was responsible for the garden. Until her family moved into Westhaven she

had lived upon a small farm where her father had not been successful. Edith still believed she preferred the country to the village, except that the village gave her the chance to be a member of the Eagle's Wing Troop of Girl Scouts.

Instead of going indoors the girls continued their walk. They were frank in explaining to Edith that they wished to investigate the neighborhood and to ask the benefit of her opinion.

Westhaven was only a small village, yet Margaret and Louise were astonished at their ignorance of the factory neighborhood.

In the winter afternoon the smoke of the huge chimneys ascended in long, dark columns; there was little wind blowing, but a sultriness that might mean a storm later on.

Edith had been prompt in her reply to the other girls' question.

Not far off was a school a dozen yards from one of the largest factories in the village. Among the children there were always some who needed aid.

Now that the girls of her Patrol had learned to understand Edith Linder they had made this discovery: What had appeared to be sullenness and lack of appreciation of friendli-

ness was shyness. She had never known any girls intimately until her arrival in Westhaven. The little farm where she had spent her childhood had been some distance from any other and she some years older than her own brothers and sisters. During the summer in Beechwood Forest the other Girl Scouts had learned that Edith's gifts were practical. She was strong and capable, although lacking certain refinements she never had the chance to acquire until her contact with her Patrol of Girl Scouts. She learned from them, and equally they would be able to learn from her.

Following Edith's suggestion, Margaret Hale stopped and called Joan Peters and Martha Greaves, the English Girl Guide, on the telephone.

They would be interested in their expedition. Tory and Dorothy she knew to be busy elsewhere. The fact of Dorothy's departure to New York she had not heard.

"She and Martha were just starting out for a walk," Joan reported, "and would be with them in a few moments."

The little group walked on in a more leisurely fashion, waiting for their companions, whom they were to meet on an appointed corner.

It was now about three o'clock in the afternoon of a day that was to be long remembered in Westhaven.

The streets were comparatively empty. At this hour the employees in the factories were particularly absorbed by their work, with lunch over and the afternoon still in its early hours.

The three Girl Scouts were able to walk abreast without troubling any one, moving aside if it became necessary.

Near a shirt factory not far from the corner where the friends had agreed to meet, Edith Linder paused.

"In there my mother and father are at work," she explained. "I may have to work there some day myself, but I shall never like it. I only care for a farm and outdoor occupations."

"Well, then, marry a farmer, Edith," Margaret Hale said laughingly.

"Perhaps I will if I have a chance," Edith answered.

Louise looked more serious.

"Suppose we live together, Edith! You and I who love the outdoors in such different fashion. Yours is certainly the sensible one. I have such a grubby attitude, wanting only

to poke around and study the trees and soil, never to make things grow.

"Why is the smoke coming out of that side wall of the factory? Do you suppose trash is being burned over there?"

Idly Louise spoke, with no special interest in her voice and a little surprised by her own discovery. Ordinarily she was not as observant as she should be.

The other girl's hand closed on her arm until the tightness of her hold was uncomfortable.

"What is it, Edith?" Margaret Hale asked anxiously. She had not listened to the conversation for the last few seconds.

There was no immediate reply, but the tension in Edith Linder's face and figure was plain to her companions.

"It is nothing, I suppose, I was a little afraid of a fire," Edith returned. "I think one often is in a factory neighborhood. I suppose I am more fearful because I have lived in the country."

Undoubtedly the smoke was increasing, yet neither Louise nor Margaret was alarmed. Gusts of smoke frequently appear in unexpected places to an outsider's eyes and usually can be traced to a natural source. Inside the

factory the occupants must be aware of what was taking place. The wind was now blowing in occasional gusts and probably forcing the smoke in varying directions.

The two girls started to move on past the factory building.

Edith held them back.

"Not for a moment, please, not until I can be sure. Will you wait here? I think I had best go to the front door and inquire what is the matter. You see, I know the manager and it will be all right."

This time Edith was walking on alone, when Louise called out sharply:

"Edith, there is a fire! Don't go nearer."

That instant a flame had leaped upward, showing scarlet against the window.

Margaret and Louise heard a curious comingling of sounds they were never to forget Edith had broken away and was running with outstretched arms and lowered head toward the narrow door opening into the factory office.

Came the noise of an explosion, then muffled cries from within the building, growing in volume, and echoed by the inhabitants of the nearby cottages and tenements.

A bell pealed somewhere. Several men rushed by on the way to give the alarm.

Too stunned to be of service for the moment, Margaret and Louise crowded against a friendly fence.

Why were the men and women, the girls and boys inside the burning building not already streaming out into the streets?

Out of the downstairs windows a few people were jumping and pushing one another. From the front door a dozen women and men ran and then a little distance off stood still, gazing upward and calling to friends above the uproar.

Edith Linder did not reappear.

A half dozen policemen appeared. Louise and Margaret found themselves thrust backward and not allowed beyond a certain line.

"What is the trouble? Why don't they clear out?" the girls overheard one man ask the other.

"Something pretty bad is the trouble! The fire has started below and the stairs are choked with smoke. Too many people in there for the size of the building. I have been afraid of something like this."

Down the street came the welcome noise of the first fire engine.

"Is there anything we can do to be useful, officer?" Margaret Hale asked.

She had regained her self-command and walked as close as possible to the dividing line, followed by Louise Miller.

The girls were wearing their Scout uniforms and now appeared calm and efficient.

"Yes, glad to have your help! See you are Scouts! In a few moments the children, whose mothers and fathers are locked in there, will be crowding the streets. Help to keep them back out of the danger line."

Not a moment too soon had the order been given.

At this instant Margaret reached to clutch a little girl, pushing her way past, wild with terror.

She fought and screamed while Margaret held her fast.

"Be quiet, your mother will be here in a few moments. If you don't stay with me, she will never know where to find you," she found herself whispering reassuringly. And something in her voice and manner made the child obey.

The following moment she opened the gate of the fence against which she and Louise had sheltered themselves and drew the little girl inside.

It chanced that in this particular place an

old building, erected many years ago and now used for storage, stood back from the sidewalk with a yard protected by a picket fence.

The yard could be made a place of refuge for the children who would try to press inside the fire lines. Margaret knew she must find some one to assist her. She turned to look for Louise Miller and discovered that Louise had a small boy by the shoulders and was pushing him before her into the same retreat.

No great length of time could have passed when Margaret Hale and Louise were being assisted by a dozen members of the Eagle's Wing Troop. Afterwards the two girls remembered they had felt no surprise. The news of the burning of the factory had spread through the village and naturally the girls had come to be of service.

This was their first important test. Never before had they been able to assume any public responsibility in the village! Were they making good in the same fashion that the Boy Scouts had upon many occasions?

The small yard became more and more crowded with frightened, crying children. Occasionally a policeman thrust a lost child into the midst of the others and went on his way.

The factory was not yet emptied of its workers. Numbers of excited men and women went past; a few tried to linger and push their way in among the children in search of their own, but were forced on.

By this time a high wind was blowing and the flames from the burning frame building crackled and roared, throwing forth long pennants of flame, as if a flag whipped in the wind were then drawn back.

Margaret Hale knew she must have overheard the explanation, that a door leading to the flight of stairs on the top floor had been locked. A hundred men and women were trapped; with the lower floors in flames, they were unable to escape.

The firemen were ascending ladders and drawing them forth one by one.

With so much to absorb energy and attention, Margaret and Louise Miller never lost the memory of Edith Linder's sudden disappearance inside the factory door. Perhaps she had been able to give the alarm or assist in the rescue. She was extraordinarily brave. The other Girl Scouts had guessed this trait of character on several unimportant occasions during their summer together in Beechwood Forest.

She could not have observed the little group of her companions when she came past, as she must have left the building some time before. One of the side walls had fallen in and the fire was diminishing.

The police were urging people to return to their homes. The worst was now over, but a space must be kept clear.

Would the Girl Scouts help the children to find their parents?

The officer to whom Margaret had first offered her own and Louise's aid stopped to lift his hat to her.

"It is not to you only, Miss, I am taking off my hat. It is to the whole of you Girl Scouts. Sure and you've done yourselves proud, and the village!" he remarked, with a delightful Irish brogue, appearing as self-possessed and good-natured as if he had not passed through the ordeal of the last hour.

It was after dusk when Louise and Margaret made their way again to Edith Linder's. They were too weary to speak to each other and too overstrained, yet could not go to their homes for the night without news of Edith.

She came out to meet them, and Margaret Hale, usually so self-contained, put her arms

about her, dropping her head on her shoulder.

“Edith, I have not had time to confess it even to myself, but I have been so frightened about you! Why were you so reckless? Surely you could do nothing to help!”

Edith made no reply to this question. Later the Girl Scouts were to learn what she had accomplished.

CHAPTER XIV

AN INTRODUCTION

A FEW days later Tory Drew and her Troop Captain were driving out toward the evergreen cabin. It was a mild winter afternoon, with light patches of snow where the sun had not shone and the ice melting between the ruts in the road.

"It is good of you, Miss Mason, to drive with me to see Mr. Winslow. Uncle Richard and I came out yesterday to find if he were comfortable, and Memory Freaan has offered to be of any service. Just the same, he might have been lonely if I had not kept my word and brought you!

"Mr. Winslow asked me yesterday to whom he was indebted for the suggestion of the cabin and I told him *you*. I told him a great deal about you."

Sheila Mason laughed.

She was looking very lovely in a dark-blue velvet coat suit with a kolinsky collar and cuffs, and a velvet hat of the same shade against the fairness of her pale-gold hair.

"Your friend will think I am a very informal person, coming to call upon him in this fashion before he has called upon me, or before I have even been introduced. Still, it was hard for you to have Dorothy desert you just as you were both to take charge of your gifted invalid! I am afraid he may find that he is lonely and dissatisfied so far from the village and I want him to feel that he may make friends in Westhaven whenever he desires, although we do not wish to be troublesome."

"I wonder if you know how pretty you are looking, Sheila? Most people do know when they are looking especially well!"

In thinking of Sheila Mason as their Girl Scout Captain, Tory always intended addressing her by her title, but when they were alone she often employed her first name.

With half-closed eyes she now gazed at her friend critically.

"If I were a full-fledged artist I would ask you to let me paint a portrait of you. As I am not, I would never be able to do you justice. I am sure Mr. Winslow would make a wonderful picture! Why don't you allow him the chance? Then he would not be lonely this winter and you would learn to know each other and I am sure—"

Tory stopped and colored.

Sheila Mason was returning her glance, laughing and frowning.

"No romancing, please, Tory, now or ever! If you start I shall refuse to get out at the evergreen cabin, and have the chauffeur motor me back home. You girls are pretty good usually, but I observed a tendency on Dorothy's part a week or ten days ago to make me figure in a romance and this afternoon *you* are drawing perilously near. Please understand, dear, that romance is over for me forever, and let us never speak of it. I am ever so much happier with you Girl Scouts than I dreamed I could be."

The younger girl bit her lips.

"I'll try to remember," she returned apologetically, "but really, Sheila, don't you think you are young to talk as if love and romance have ended for you? Think of Uncle Richard and Memory Freat! They never *say* anything and yet now and then I cannot help guessing they must be a little sorry. I have been considering the men I have met in Westhaven and really no one of them if half as nice as you are; but Mr. Winslow is different. I beg your pardon. I won't speak of this again. Don't be angry; I'll change the sub-

ject and never refer to it. There are several other things I really want dreadfully to talk to you about.

"Don't you think it odd that I have never heard a word from Dorothy or Kara since Dr. McClain and Dorothy reached New York? I can't imagine whether it is because Lance is so ill, or because something has developed about Kara. Still, I don't see how a letter from Lance's friend, Mr. Moore, can have any connection with Kara. I don't really think so. Only, I nearly always am thinking of her."

A silence fell between the girl and her companion and the sensation of annoyance passed from Sheila Mason. Girls of Tory's age and the other Girl Scouts were inclined to be sentimental, not in regard to themselves but their older friends. The sentiment Tory had just uttered was not hers alone. Now and then Sheila's own mother protested that she must not sacrifice her entire life to a memory. She was altogether too young and pretty.

Either with her mother or Tory, Sheila did not agree. The other girl's devotion to Katherine Moore always made an appeal to her.

At this moment she slipped her hand inside her companion's.

"I would not believe there is anything serious the matter with Lance or Kara until you hear. You are sure to have a letter from Dorothy by to-morrow. She has only been away a short time and is probably so distracted by New York. Remember your Knighthood, Tory, and be brave as possible."

The girl smiled ruefully, but afterwards her expression brightened.

"We have one Knight of our Girl Scout Round Table whose banner can be inscribed with the story of a noble deed. Isn't it wonderful to think of Edith Linder's bravery? Memory Frean says that the people of Westhaven wish to offer her a reward of some kind to show their appreciation of what she accomplished as a Girl Scout. We have no right to share in the honor, I least of all, who objected to Edith's joining our Patrol when her name was first proposed! Don't you think she has earned the Golden Eaglet?"

The Troop Captain nodded.

"I have been thinking the same thing. No one would dispute the justice of Edith's claim to the highest honor a Girl Scout can attain. How often the people who do the bravest acts are those we least expect it of!"

"Yes, and Edith is unconscious as if she

had done nothing at all. She does not wish to be praised or to discuss the question. Margaret and Louise declare that Edith did not refer to anything unusual when they went to see if she were safe. She looked used up, but then so did every one else who had been helping."

"Can you tell me a clear story of what Edith did?" the Troop Captain inquired. "I wish to write an account to the Scout magazine and to make no mistake."

Tory Drew closed her eyes. Her mental impression was always clearer with nothing to distract her from the outside.

"I think I can tell you briefly.

"When Edith entered the factory building there was no one in the office. The alarm of fire had just been shouted through the building and the superintendent had rushed out. Edith ran into one of the rooms on the ground floor where the men and women were already making their escape. She overheard some one say there was no danger; everybody would be able to get out. Her mother and father she believed¹ at work on the top floor, and Edith started up the stairs. As she ran some one shouted to her to come down, as the stairways were filling with smoke. She kept on, although

nearly knocked down any number of times by frightened people rushing past. Once Edith believed she was overcome by the smoke and dropped on the floor, and some one trampled over her. This seemed to bring her to her senses, for she got up and continued struggling up a flight of steps, black and thick with acrid fumes. She could hear people shouting and beating on a door at the top of the stairs.

"Edith insists that she had no idea of this door being locked or what she was going to accomplish, and for this reason deserves no special praise or reward. She was only fighting her way to her mother and father.

"She says she recalls puzzling over the fact that no one was running down these stairs as she dragged herself up. Then she put out her hand and touched a heavy steel door. She could see nothing and was scarcely conscious of what she was doing. The door would not move, so she threw herself against it blindly, searching for the key, found and turned it in the lock. The door seemed to fall open from the weight of the men and women who had been trying to rush it. Her mother happened to be on a lower floor. Edith's own father carried her downstairs when the others were so crazed with fear they might have trampled her."

Tory put her gloved hands against her hot cheeks and leaned over toward the open window of the car for a breath of the winter air.

"Please do not let us talk of the fire again, Sheila, not for some time anyhow, certainly not to Mr. Winslow. I dread the thought of it; I think of nothing else, waking or sleeping. It may seem absurd, but Edith Linder was much calmer than I when we talked of it."

The Troop Captain put her arm about the younger girl.

"No, Tory dear, we won't speak of it again; I am sorry I troubled you. You are more sensitive and impressionable than the other girls and I ought to have remembered!"

Tory's lips were trembling.

"That is a kind way of expressing things, Sheila, when the truth is I am a bigger goose. A good many people were injured. The Girl Scouts will have no difficulty now in finding people who need their care. I am giving nearly every cent of my allowance to the fund that is being raised."

Fortunately the automobile had reached the end of the country road. To arrive at the evergreen cabin one must now follow a foot-path.

With pleasure and relief the Troop Captain

and Tory started along the familiar trail, leading to the heart of their former summer encampment in Beechwood Forest.

This afternoon the little house showed more plainly. Many of the leaves were frosted and fallen, revealing the heavy tangle of the vines.

"Do you wish *we* were living here, instead of Mr. Winslow?" Tory demanded.

"No, I am afraid it would be too lonely unless one were a genius or a lover of nature like Memory Freat. I believe she is lonely herself now and then, although she will never confess it. She and Mr. Winslow are close neighbors. Why can't you develop a romance between them?"

Emphatically Tory shook her head.

"Certainly not. Memory is years older! Besides, her romance belongs in our family! Goodness, there is Mr. Winslow at the door! He is dreadfully shy and if he should dream I have been romancing about him I am afraid would go back at once to New York."

A tall, slightly stooped man with the fine brown eyes and sweep of darker brown hair walked down the path to meet them. He was not like Sheila's mental impression of him. He was younger and had more courtesy, more sense of humor, than she had imagined.

He seemed appreciative of her call without taking it too seriously.

He had been expecting Tory and one of her friends, so had made arrangements for tea.

A fair amount of inexpensive china had been left in an old cabinet at the cabin when the Girl Scouts returned to their homes.

The little stove, set up inside the fireplace, was warmer than an open fire, if not so picturesque.

Mr. Winslow had brought but few of his personal possessions. He had several favorite pictures hung against the rich brown wood of the cabin walls.

A sketch book lay open on a table.

Sheila Mason saw it at once and asked to be allowed to look at the sketches.

In spite of his beautiful manners she had discovered that her new acquaintance was shyer than she had imagined. Dorothy and Tory were not so far from the truth, for he did give one the impression that he suffered from a disappointment that had had a deep influence upon his nature. Whether his disappointment was due to his lack of success or to some other reason, Sheila had no way of estimating. When they knew each other better he might confide in her. She felt they might become

friends, as he would recognize that she too had been more unhappy than most people.

These were the Troop Captain's unspoken impressions as she and Mr. Winslow sat by the window of the cabin studying his book of sketches. Already he had made a drawing of the cabin with the beechwood forest as a background which she greatly admired and coveted.

As they talked Tory was making the final preparations for tea.

She insisted the privilege be granted her, as she knew the resources of the cabin better than its present host. Moreover, her aunt, Miss Victoria Fenton, had sent the newcomer a number of gifts for his present and future comfort.

Tory had carried them packed in a basket.

She placed the cake and the home-made jam on the table, glancing frequently at her two companions.

They seemed to be getting on very well, considering their brief acquaintance.

It occurred to Tory that she was being ignored more than she anticipated, considering the fact that she had first met Mr. Winslow and that his presence in the evergreen cabin was due to their friendship.

The Troop Captain had taken off her velvet coat and hat, as the room was warm. The two heads were bent close over the sketch book.

Studying them, Tory smiled.

Not half an hour before she had been reproached for being romantic and made to promise never to offend again. Certainly she had not dreamed that Miss Mason and Mr. Winslow would develop a liking for each other so promptly.

When tea was ready, purposely Tory called Mr. Winslow to her assistance. He should not be monopolized.

She hoped that he would become sufficiently interested in her to allow her to study painting with him during the approaching summer.

They had a delightful tea. Returning home, Tory had forgotten the circumstances that had been troubling her: Dr. McClain and Dorothy's unexpected summons to New York City and the fact that she had not received her usual letter from Katherine Moore.

In the front hall Mr. Richard Fenton was awaiting her arrival.

"We are leaving on an early train in the morning for New York, if you can manage to

be ready, Tory. Your Aunt Victoria will help you pack your bag. I don't think there is any cause to be alarmed. I have just received a telegram from Dr. McClain asking me to join him as soon as possible and to bring you. Please don't worry or I shall be sorry to have had to mention the telegram to you to-night. If you wish to be of service, Tory dear, you must keep your self-control."

CHAPTER XV

UNRAVELING

AT the Grand Central Station Mr. Fenton and Tory found not only Dr. McClain and Dorothy awaiting them, but Mr. Jeremy Hammond.

Tory's first impression was surprise at his unexpected presence. She had not seen him since the summer before in Beechwood Forest, when he had insisted upon investigating more thoroughly the evergreen cabin in quest of information with regard to Katherine Moore. Nothing had come of the search save a package of letters apparently of no importance.

During the winter Kara had written that Mr. and Mrs. Hammond had come frequently to see her, bringing the small girl whom they had adopted from the Gray House on the Hill.

Not the faintest envy had ever influenced Kara. Tory had never been able to dispel a slight resentment that Mr. Hammond's choice had fallen upon the exquisite wilful little girl rather than upon Kara.

Mr. Hammond had come to the Gray House to seek for Kara. She was the child he had

discovered in the deserted cabin years before. His sudden fascination with Lucy's youth and beauty caused him to disregard Kara's finer possibilities. However, he had afterwards proved himself Kara's friend and been deeply interested in her recovery. Tory concluded that she had no right to harbor any grievance. Assuredly Kara would seriously object to such an emotion.

The instant after greetings had been exchanged, Dorothy slipped her arm through the newcomer's and drew her apart from the others.

Tory found herself afraid to look closely at her friend.

Would Dorothy's face reveal strain and unhappiness from the past few days.

"Lance?" she queried with the first glance, and felt a sense of relief before the reply.

Dorothy appeared grave, even disturbed, but not unhappy.

"No, there is nothing the matter with Lance. In fact, he has had a piece of rare good fortune. We are to go to Mr. Hammond's office as soon as you and Mr. Fenton have left your bags at a hotel. Father must return to Westhaven as soon as possible and wants to talk to you first. Please don't ask questions.

It is all too involved and mysterious to make you understand anything. I don't understand, although I have heard every detail."

"One thing I must ask: Has the mystery to do with Kara?"

Dorothy nodded.

"Yes, but not what you think!" which was something of a triumph as an answer that was valueless.

To save time, Mr. Fenton and Tory agreed to go directly to Mr. Hammond's place of business, which was not far away. He had a private office and their interview, that appeared to be secret, would not be interrupted. A telephone message secured the necessary hotel accommodations.

Tory's surroundings made a vivid impression upon her, although she was scarcely aware of having done more than glance about her in the hour that followed.

On one of the highest floors in a tall building Mr. Hammond's office windows commanded a magnificent view of the city—the broken skyline, the matchless harbor, dotted with ships from the seven seas, the network of fairy-like bridges crossing to Long Island.

Tory sat in a small, straight-backed chair near one of the windows, with Dorothy close

beside her. Their faces were turned away from the distant vista and their eyes upon the central figure in the group of three men.

Mr. Hammond was in his office chair near his roll-top desk.

His usual somewhat careless, debonair expression had altered to one of concern.

"I am going to ask Hammond to tell you the story," Dr. McClain explained. "He has more experience with this sort of thing. I confess a country doctor comes in touch with more curious and romantic circumstances than most people imagine. This is a more complicated situation than I am accustomed to handling. Personally, I am disturbed; I don't know what to believe or the next step to take."

"You are not making the reason for our unexpected summons to New York any plainer," Mr. Fenton returned, smiling at his older friend's preoccupation.

Tory gave a suppressed sigh to suggest the eagerness of her own interest, but managed to make no remark.

"It is difficult to know just where to start," Mr. Hammond added. "Dr. McClain is right. The story contains a number of puzzling details that make it hard to accept. Yet

there is no point in Moore's telling anything that is not the truth. He has nothing to gain except added responsibility. And in a day or so he claims he will be able to offer more definite proof. In the interval, Mr. Fenton, Dr. McClain and I decided to ask not only your advice but your niece's. Had we best go on, or let the affair drop here."

"Yes; but oh, what *is it* you are talking about?" Tory demanded, unable to keep silence longer.

Mr. Hammond smiled.

"I don't wonder you are growing restless, but please listen carefully. There are so many circumstances and chance meetings that have to be interwoven.

"In the first place, Lance McClain tells his father and sister that quite by accident he came in contact with a Mr. Moore. It seems that he is a musical chap and appears to be rich and cultivated. Well, he took an interest in Lance. He confided to me he thinks the boy a kind of a genius and wants to help him.

"In the early part of their acquaintance they talked of nothing but music and Lance's ambition to set the world on fire by to-morrow or next day, also the fact that his family had not the proper faith in him. By and by

Lance seems to have announced that his father was a fairly good sort, except for this weakness, and was a physician in the town of Westhaven.

“Lance tells me Westhaven awakened Mr. Moore’s interest at once. Moore wanted to know the size of the place and its exact position, who the prominent people were and what towns were nearby. With the aid of a railroad map and time-table the questions were not difficult to answer. Afterwards Lance could supply him with the town’s social history. The boy declares he was puzzled to understand any cause for his new friend’s interest in Westhaven, but for some reason felt in honor bound not to inquire.

“This is where I enter the mystery story.”

At this instant Tory leaned forward, her lips parted. Would Mr. Hammond at last reveal the point in all his past ten minutes’ conversation? What possible difference could it make to any of them whether a complete stranger happened to care to hear unimportant facts concerning the town of Westhaven? Once more it occurred to Tory that the village was not of such supreme moment as its inhabitants considered it.

“I was reading the paper one morning when idly my eyes fell upon an advertisement

signed Moore, asking that some one from Westhaven communicate with the writer. I recalled the fact that one or two of the letters we discovered in the evergreen cabin were signed 'Moore.'

"If I had not been going to see Kara at the time and felt tremendously concerned over her misfortune, I don't believe I would have paid any attention to the notice. I chanced to see Kara that same afternoon. We laughed over it and I promised to reply to the advertisement, hoping it might be entertainment for her. The child was having such a hopelessly dull and trying time!"

She had not intended to speak, but Tory was given to impetuous utterance of her opinions and emotions.

"I am so sorry, Mr. Hammond. I thought you were not in the least interested in Kara, that you cared only for Lucy. I hoped you would have chosen to adopt Kara when you came for the purpose to the Gray House on the Hill."

Tory abruptly stopped, feeling, rather than seeing, that her uncle's eyes were upon her, reproving her for the interruption.

Mr. Hammond did not appear seriously annoyed.

"Perhaps I should, Tory, but there is no accounting for other people's wishes and tastes. I wanted a younger child than Kara, and Lucy fascinated me. You are mistaken, however; if I was not interested by Kara at that first meeting, afterwards I learned to admire and care for her. If you will try and wait for the end of my story, perhaps you may find that Kara had a better fortune in store for her than I could bestow."

"I have always known something wonderful would happen for Kara," Tory murmured, and then flushed and bit her lips.

"Do please be still and wait, can't you, Tory?" Dorothy whispered with an impatience she rarely showed.

"Don't you think you are going too far, Hammond?" Dr. McClain interposed. "You are giving Richard Fenton and Tory the impression that we have actual information when neither of us is completely convinced."

Having the same sanguine and ardent temperament that Tory Drew possessed, Mr. Hammond appeared a little nonplussed.

"Yes? Well, perhaps you are right, Dr. McClain, although I might as well confess right here that personally I am convinced. It is getting on toward lunch time. Will you

have lunch with me and allow me to end my story afterwards?"

Not daring to speak again, Tory's imploring gaze at her uncle would have influenced his decision had he not been of the same mind.

"No, we are in no hurry for lunch and considerably impatient to discover how Lance McClain's new-found friend has any connection with Katherine Moore. I recall the child was brought to the Gray House on the Hill when she was little more than a baby, with nothing known of her parentage or history save the name written on a slip of paper pinned to her dress."

"Why, this Mr. Owen Moore claims to be her—"

"Father?" Mr. Fenton finished.

Tory glanced at him in an amused fashion in spite of the intensity of her excitement, so rarely did Mr. Fenton forget to be perfectly courteous.

The other man shook his head.

"No, not so simple as that! The story is more involved and a good deal more sentimental, romantic, whatever you wish to call it."

"I don't see any reason why one should *not* believe what Mr. Moore says," Dorothy

McClain declared, breaking into the conversation for the first time. The color was coming and going swiftly in her clear skin, her gray-blue eyes were calm and untroubled. "He is a gentleman and has any number of friends willing to guarantee the truth of what he says. Lance declares he is the kindest and sincerest human being he has ever known."

"Well, here is what Mr. Moore told me at our original interview! Later we decided to send for Dr. McClain and Dorothy for two reasons; Mr. Moore wished to have some one else judge of his statement. He also wished some one else to verify the account *I* gave of discovering a baby, deserted in a cabin on the outskirts of Westhaven more than ten years ago. Moreover, Mr. Moore had an added interest in seeing Dr. McClain and Dorothy in that he wished to propose a plan concerning Lance," Mr. Hammond continued.

"Owen Moore is a quiet, eccentric man, I should say between thirty and forty years old, who comes originally from Boston.

"Somewhere between ten and eleven years ago he was seriously ill when he received a letter from an old friend asking him to come to her at once. I believe she had been more than a friend when they were younger. They

had been engaged and the engagement broken off for a reason they afterwards regretted. So, notwithstanding his illness, knowing that the need was urgent, he went at once to the writer of the letter. He found her in a tumble-down farmhouse between twenty and thirty miles from Westhaven. She was deserted and alone save for the kindness of the neighbors, the nearest living more than a mile away. The only human being with her was a little girl of between two and three years of age.

"Very soon after his arrival he saw that his friend was dying. She and a physician left no doubt of the matter in his mind.

"She asked him to take her little girl, to adopt her and give her the name, Katherine Moore."

Dorothy's hand reached out and caught Tory's, calming her excitement by her quiet grasp.

"Mr. Moore gave her his promise. The child's father had disappeared and there was no one else. He agreed to return later and take the little girl away, and in the meantime intended to arrange that the friend he had once cared for should have every comfort.

"It was not necessary; she died before he

could leave. After things were over he started away on horseback with the child. There is nothing so extraordinary in this; romantic of course, but life is full of romance! Mr. Moore is perfectly able to prove this portion of his story; people are still living in the neighborhood who remember the circumstances. I took it upon myself to go to the place and inquire soon after my original interview with Mr. Moore. Look here, Dr. McClain, you take the story up here. I have not talked so continuously in years. This is your province, that it has to do with illness."

Dr. McClain nodded.

"I seem to be the doubting spirit in this matter. I know that Dorothy and Lance and I realize now that Mr. Hammond is equally convinced. Of course Mr. Moore has nothing to gain, and what he tells of taking place afterwards *is* perfectly plausible.

"Until after he rode away from the farmhouse with the little girl, he scarcely had thought of his own state of health. He had been conscious of exhaustion and headache, but too wholly absorbed by the sorrowful parting to give any thought to himself.

"As he rode on, he became more and more aware that he was suffering from dizziness

and headache. He repented having brought the child with him. He had thought of nothing else at the time but to get as far away from the scene as possible. He intended taking a train for Boston at a nearby station and sending the horse back to a neighboring farm by some one at the station. He was not familiar with the country and lost his way. He continued riding on, growing less and less responsible for what he was doing. He seems very hazy upon these details, but believes he dismounted and went into a house that he saw along the way to ask for aid. He claims to have known nothing more of what took place for weeks. He awakened in a hospital in Boston, where he had been desperately ill. Not at once did he recall the experience through which he had lately passed, and only by degrees did the knowledge return to him."

"Well, why did he not come back and find Kara as soon as he remembered?" Tory demanded, torn between anger and rapture.

This was a more thrilling story than her imagination had conceived in days when she used to amuse the practical Kara with the wildest stories of her unknown history.

"I don't myself see why not, Tory," Dr. McClain answered. "Mr. Moore says that he

did make careful inquiries, but had no idea of where he had left the child, not even the name of any nearby town. He must have ridden a good many miles before he reached the vicinity of the evergreen cabin. He has always had some one employed to investigate the matter and always expected eventually to find the child. Some months ago he was told of the Gray House on the Hill in Westhaven, and naturally reached the conclusion that the little girl may have been brought up in an orphan asylum. He sent a lawyer to Westhaven to make inquiries and inserted the advertisement that Mr. Hammond answered. When he learned Lance came from Westhaven, naturally he proved another source of information."

"Well, has Mr. Moore seen Kara? What does *she* say? How has she borne the excitement? How amused and surprised Kara must be after always insisting that she was the most prosaic of persons and never would there be any possible interest connected with her history!" Tory exclaimed.

Dr. McClain frowned.

"That is just it, Tory, and the reason we have sent for you. Kara has not seen Mr. Moore, she has been told nothing. If his story

is not true, or if she should not be the child, I am worried concerning the effect it might have upon her. She is improving slowly and I don't wish anything to interfere. What is your opinion?"

"Tell Kara at once," Tory replied. "She has the right to hear. You need not be afraid for Kara in a situation like this. She is one of the sanest people in the world. If nothing comes of it she will be no less happy. All she really cares for is to be well again so that she can make her own future."

"Then you girls will prepare her?" Dr. McClain asked.

There was nothing for Tory and Dorothy save to agree.

CHAPTER XVI

DOUBT

I NEVER heard a more unlikely story in my life, Tory darling; it certainly can have nothing to do with me! I don't see how you and Dorothy can possibly regard it seriously. Oh, well, perhaps I can see that *you* would seize upon any straw and let your imagination do the rest! You always have been so determined to find me a thrilling background. But, Dorothy, *you* are a much more matter-of-fact person and don't really believe this Mr. Moore has any connection with me."

The three girls were driving along Riverside, not in a car, but actually in an old-fashioned carriage, which Mr. Fenton had obtained with great difficulty.

Kara was well enough to be in need of fresh air and a change of environment. Her two friends thought she appeared frailer than when they had last seen her during the Christmas holidays, but in a happier state of mind. So they had chosen to confide their piece of news

not inside her small hospital room, but during a quiet drive along the river.

At first it appeared a problem to divert Kara's attention from the beauty of the Palisades, smoke-gray and violet in the afternoon light, from her interest in the cars passing and repassing, from the boats moving slowly or swiftly up and down the broad expanse of water.

A faint color came into her cheeks, her eyes were growing more humorous and less wistful. Neither of her companions wished to intrude a serious subject of conversation upon her mood.

"Surely, you have been out driving before, haven't you, Kara? You have been well enough to be out of doors for several weeks. Can't you pay more attention to us and less to the scenery?" Tory demanded finally, fearing the drive might be at an end and they forced to separate before their story could be told.

Kara smiled with the wide gray eyes that were her chief beauty.

"Of course I have been driving before! Mr. and Mrs. Hammond and Lucy have taken me several times in their car. Once, not long ago, Lance actually appeared in a taxicab

which he said he had the privilege of using for two hours. He told me the friend who had been so kind to him wished him to invite me for a ride through Central Park. Lance wanted to talk of the wonderful chance he thought might be coming to him."

The opening had seemed propitious. Tory nodded at Dorothy to ask her advice.

Then observing that Kara was laughing at them both, she hesitated.

Dorothy made no pretence of introducing the subject. She and Tory had agreed that it was wiser for Tory to give an outline of the situation, with Dorothy to corroborate and add convincing details that otherwise might be forgotten.

Between her two friends upon the low, broad seat of an old-fashioned vehicle which resembled a victoria, a favorite equipage of bygone days, Kara now slipped her hand inside theirs.

"Do you suppose I have had a drive I have enjoyed like this with both of you beside me? But, Tory dear, please tell me what it is you wish to say. I hope you may never have any *very* important secret to conceal, you are so transparent! This afternoon I don't mind hearing, as from your expression I am sure it

is something exciting. So I can listen and look at our surroundings at the same time, can't I?"

"No, Kara, you must give me your undivided attention," Tory replied, so solemnly that the other girl was silenced. A slight wave of what might have suggested regret passed over her face.

Life had been so full of serious things these past six months, she had wanted one happy afternoon, when she might forget.

During the long recital she had asked a few questions and at this instant had uttered her innermost conviction.

"I believe you are mistaken, Kara. When you see Mr. Moore you will feel differently. He is very quiet and seems to dislike meeting strangers and having to discuss his private affairs. He declares that the thought of having failed to keep his promise, and knowing nothing of the little girl he was to care for all these years, has made him more of a recluse than he might otherwise have been. As a matter of fact, father says he is convinced at last that Mr. Moore is telling the truth. He has seen his lawyer and learned that he is a member of a distinguished family and has the reputation for being extremely cultured and generous. Certainly his kindness to Lance

might have convinced father without further investigation! I really believe that father, without realizing the fact, is a little jealous because Mr. Moore has been able to do for Lance what he could not afford, and Lance adores him!" Dorothy McClain interposed, observing that Tory appeared crestfallen at the fashion in which Kara had received the amazing story.

"Yes, I understand, Dorothy. I am not in the least venturing to dispute Mr. Moore's account of what he thinks occurred so many years ago. I only very seriously doubt that I have any part in it. I presume there are hundreds of other children who are as likely to be the girl he is seeking." Kara's tone lacked entire conviction.

"Please don't say what you really know isn't true, Kara!" Tory protested, with more irritability than she realized. She had been tremendously keyed up over the problem of imparting the extraordinary situation to the other girl. She could not help being annoyed by Kara's calm dismissal of its importance.

"It is absurd to pretend that the fact the name 'Katherine Moore' was pinned to your dress, when you were discovered, does not help in identifying you. Mr. Moore says

that your mother asked that you be called by his name. He spoke of you as Katherine before any one thought of mentioning the one thing that *is known* concerning you. Is it that you do not want what we have told you to be true, Kara? To deny that you are the girl Mr. Moore is searching for is ridiculous. He has undeniable proof that Westhaven is between twenty and thirty miles from the farm where he found you and your mother. The evergreen cabin is along the route to the station where he took the train for Boston. Mr. Moore believes that he realized he was ill and started out to find some one to look after you. He must have grown worse, because he knew nothing for several weeks. Then he found himself in a hospital in Boston. Dr. McClain says this often occurs in illness. Mr. Moore had intended going to Boston and must have gotten on board the train. Afterwards people on the train took charge of him; they found his name and address from letters in his pocket. He was an old bachelor with no close relatives and had confided to no one where he had gone, but his friends were looking after him when he recovered consciousness."

"Yes, Tory, you seem to have arranged

everything satisfactorily, as if you had been writing a mystery story and had carefully gathered up all the clues! May I be allowed to say that I would like to have it explained to me why a package of letters were given to me at the end of last summer found in the old fireplace at the evergreen cottage? Did the eccentric old bachelor dispose of the letters in the same fashion he got rid of me?"

"Then you confess you were the child, Kara?" Tory interrupted. "Don't attempt to pretend you do not think so after what you have said."

"But I am *not* convinced. I think it is all very tiresome and absurd and I wish you had never told me. After all, suppose it is true and I am the girl, he is no relative of mine! I prefer the Gray House and my friends in Westhaven. I don't wish to have anything to do with this Mr. Moore. Dr. McClain says I may be well in a year or so and then I shall be able to take care of myself."

A second time Tory was beginning to protest and reproach Kara for her unreasonable attitude, but a warning glance from Dorothy McClain restrained her.

Kara's color, her cheerful expression had vanished. She was white and exhausted.

"If you don't mind, I think I would like to go back to the hospital; I am tired all of a sudden," she remarked.

Tory was frightened.

She had insisted that Kara be told the peculiar circumstances she had just related, arguing that she would receive the information in her usual sensible and matter-of-fact fashion.

Kara had been through too much suffering and anxiety since her accident the summer before to have any new problem presented to her. Should they have waited until she was stronger? Tory was not sure.

She put her arm about the slender figure.

"Do try not to think any more of what we have been talking about for the present, Kara. It is my fault, I wanted you to hear. If you don't like Mr. Moore you need not have anything to do with him. You have friends enough if he never had been heard of! I shall hate it if he does more for you than we can. Just the same I think you had best know that Mr. Moore has seen the letters. Mr. Hammond showed them to him. They were ordinary friendly letters he had written your mother from time to time, not important, and thinks he must have thrown them into the fire with the idea of burning them. There

is no question that the letters were written by him, as his handwriting is exactly the same."

"Do you think it my duty to see this Mr. Moore, Dorothy? I know what Tory will say," Kara inquired when they were within a block of their destination. "Can you imagine anything more disappointing than for a man of the kind Lance describes, cultured, musical, of a distinguished family, to have to devote any time or thought to so insignificant a person as I am? There is *one* consolation, he is sure to like me even less than I shall like him."

"I would not trouble. I would not see Mr. Moore for the present, Kara dear," Dorothy answered in a calm and reassuring tone. "In any case you must talk the matter over with father before you decide. He is coming to see you after dinner to-night, as he must return to Westhaven in the morning. If you do conclude to see Mr. Moore, why, I would not for days and days until I was in exactly the right mood."

CHAPTER XVII

AN ANNOUNCEMENT

AN occasional early spring day was making its appearance in the Connecticut valley. Only a few faint spears of green showed on the long, pointed fingers of the willow trees, a bursting of the hardiest buds on the lilac bushes, while the pussy willow was enjoying its usual triumph, the first harbinger of the approaching season.

As a matter of fact, when the Girl Scouts and their Troop Captain set out on their afternoon hike, except to eager and trained eyes winter was still chiefly in evidence.

In out-of-the-way places there were thin layers of ice with the melted water showing beneath. The skies were gray, with rare streaks of blue, the atmosphere had the clear sharpness of recent frost, the wind blew with a definite chillness.

The group of twelve girls and their Captain were on their way to Beechwood Forest, where they had spent the previous summer in camping.

"Do you suppose we can manage to stop by the House in the Woods and see Miss Frean? I have not seen her in ages!" Dorothy McClain remarked. "Do you see as much of her as usual, Tory?"

Her companion shook her head.

"No; I don't believe Memory cares for me as much as she did when we first knew each other. It is difficult to explain. She is as kind and charming as ever, but I have lost the feeling that she wants me with her. Uncle Richard no longer goes to see her. I don't know what could have happened and he declined to explain. After Memory's illness in the early winter he used to call on her frequently. I have sometimes wondered if I remind her too much of him. But here I am romancing again! Glad you do not object so seriously as Kara!"

The girls were not walking in drill formation and so were able to talk with one another.

Louise Miller at this moment caught up with her two friends.

"Forgive me if I overheard a part of what you were saying, Tory," she began, "and forgive me again if I say that I don't think you ought to have thought or expressed such an opinion. Miss Frean is as fond of you as

she ever was. There is no question that she has more real affection for you than any other of the Girl Scouts. The other thing you spoke of is her own affair and I don't feel you should have mentioned it."

Louise had an abrupt, awkward fashion of speech that at times made her family and friends angry.

Reproachfully Dorothy McClain shook her head at this moment.

Tory had a quick temper. She rarely made unfortunate remarks to other persons, and having beautiful manners under most circumstances, perhaps possessed the right to resent the lack of them in other people.

At this moment she flushed and bit her lips, but made no reply.

"Don't you think, after all, that what Tory thinks and declares is her own affair and not yours, Ouida? When did you decide to become the censor of our manners?"

Dorothy's tone held a slight dryness that was a sharper rebuke than irritation, especially as she so rarely criticized the other girl, in spite of their years of intimacy.

"Dorothy is right, I beg your pardon, Tory," Louise faltered, a slow color making her heavy features less attractive.

"The truth is I am so grateful for what Miss Frean has offered to do for me that I am too ready to defend her where I have no shadow of justification."

"What is Memory going to do for you, Louise?" Tory inquired, having fought and conquered her sudden gust of temper. She was learning more self-control of late, when she had been tried in more than one fashion.

"Perhaps I should not have said what I did, but Dorothy and I have grown so intimate over the problem of Kara's strange attitude that I tell her most things. I suppose Memory is helping you because she thinks you are specially in need of her help. She has a way of passing herself from one person to the other for this reason."

Louise hesitated.

"I am one of the most awkward persons in the world, Tory, and you are a dear not to be angry! I overheard what was not intended for me and reproached you for it.

"Yes, I do need Miss Frean's help. I have not had a happy winter, things at home are becoming more and more difficult. It is just such things as my having made that impolite speech to you without intending or realizing how it might affect you, that makes my mother

hopeless concerning me. I thought after last summer I would improve."

"Yes, Ouida, but come to the point. What is Miss Freaan to do to help reconcile you to life? Don't you suppose I appreciate that things have been specially hard for you at home? Perhaps you have not been conscious of the fact, but I have seen less of you this winter than since we were tiny girls. Even old Don noticed the fact and asked me what was the matter," Dorothy McClain protested.

For just a flashing moment Louise's heavy features lightened and Tory caught the look of affectionate devotion in the large, pale-gray eyes with their queerly fringed lashes.

"No day has passed without my seeing you, Dorothy, when I have not missed you and longed for you. But I knew you had Tory and the excitement of Lance and Kara. Then mother did not wish me to see so much of you," Louise added with her fatal tactlessness.

At this it was Dorothy whose color flushed her clear, bright skin. Her gray-blue eyes dropped.

"Sorry your mother thinks I am a bad influence! Perhaps I am! Only, Tory, I trust Miss Victoria and Mr. Fenton will not reach the same conclusion, or I should be deserted indeed."

"Now you are hurting Ouida. Do let's be sensible and stop arguing. Louise did not mean that her mother considered you an undesirable character, Dorothy. Perhaps she may be just a little jealous of Louise's affection for you. We are but mortals, all of us, even mothers, I suppose, although Dorothy has no mother and I only a stepmother." Tory made an amusing grimace. "I would like to recall the fact, Louise, that we still are in the dark with regard to you and Memory Frean. Here, I may as well confess my jealousy. I don't like Louise being more of a favorite than I am, just as I resented Edith Linder, I suppose."

"Oh, it is nothing to create envy, hatred, malice or other uncharitableness, Tory," Louise answered, her serenity restored, and smiling happily. "You would hate what Miss Frean and I are planning to do. I am to be allowed to spend an afternoon each week with her and go on with the studies of the outdoors that I found so thrilling during our summer camp. We are going to study tree-ology and bug-ology and stone-ology. Miss Frean insists she does not know about them, but we can work outdoors together and she will have as much pleasure as I feel. This

cannot be true, but is a delightful idea. She does not think it absurd for me to wish to become a naturalist. One may have it for a pastime at least! Anyhow, I won't do what I dislike all the time!"

Half an hour later one would scarcely have believed in the lessening of the affection between Tory Drew and Memory Frean.

The Troop of Scouts and their Captain having halted at the House in the Woods, Miss Frean had been persuaded to join them for the deeper walk into the forest.

The beech woods were full of shadows and little shivery, sighing winds. A few seared leaves that had clung all winter to the otherwise bare branches rattled and shook like castanets. The younger beeches showed a few uncurling leaves and ripples of light along the gray-brown bark of their trunks.

On the ground under the trees were the first spring beauties and wild pale violets.

The girls had scattered into groups and were investigating the favorite haunts of the past summer.

Tory Drew led Miss Frean apart from the others and away from the woods toward the shore of the small lake. Above rose the three pine hills.

The girl shrugged her shoulders with a faintly nervous gesture.

"I don't like the woods to-day for some reason, Memory; they are kind of ghostly and unfriendly. I like shining places filled with light and color."

The older woman shook her head.

"You are too impressionable, Tory dear! I wish you would not always yield to your fancies."

In response Tory smiled and dropped her head an instant against her companion's shoulder with one of her favorite gestures of affection.

"It is nice to hear you scold. I was just telling Dorothy and Louise that you had ceased to care for me as you did in the beginning of our friendship. I have not enjoyed it."

"You are mistaken, Tory. I care for you perhaps more than ever. Your winter has been more absorbed than you realize in your interest in the strange circumstances concerning Kara and in your concern over Lance McClain. Besides, I thought it best to realize I might be making a mistake if I should become too devoted to one Girl Scout who might any day go away to join her father and her friends and Westhaven see her no more."

There was a gravity in her companion's voice that startled the girl, who had been only half in earnest.

"Why, I am not going away, Memory! At least I have no idea of any such possibility! Father has said nothing of it. And in any case I should always come back to Westhaven. There is Uncle Richard and you and the Girl Scouts! Why did you make such a suggestion? Do you remember that when you presented me with my talisman you said I would learn to love Westhaven with all my heart and that no matter where I might be I would wander back now and then?"

Miss Frean nodded.

"Yes, Tory, I remember very well. I want to make a confession. I was growing too fond of you to be content with an occasional sight of you, perhaps with a year or years in between. So I came to my senses and concluded I had no possible claim upon you except that we must always be good friends and you must come to me freely at any time when I can be of use."

Tory's face clouded.

"I see. So before anything happened you put me out of your life and thought, just as you must have Uncle Richard many years ago."

If Tory's speech startled her companion it was as unexpected in her own ears. What a fatal gift she had of speaking from the depth of her inner thought!

"Tory!" Miss Frean exclaimed.

"I am sorry. I had not intended to be rude, only what I said must be true. You are such a self-sufficient person, Memory Frean, and Uncle Richard and I are not. We have found we are a good deal alike since we have been living together, although I never believed I was in the least like my mother's people. I suppose you won't tell me why you will not allow Uncle Richard to be friends with you at present? He was enjoying coming to see you, and he calls on very few people."

The older woman hesitated, her blue eyes, ordinarily serene, looking uncertain and troubled.

"You are an impetuous person, Tory, and will never fail in this world for any lack of sincerity. After all, there is no reason why I should not tell you what you ask! You may be annoyed with me, but I think I am right."

Tory sighed.

"Yes, I suppose you are. You are one of the persons who would be right, yet I have an idea it has been hard for Uncle Richard."

Her speech made Miss Frean's answer more difficult, nevertheless she went on firmly:

"Your uncle and I were more than friends when we were younger. I don't know how much or how little you have been told. His family never wished him to marry me, and for that and other reasons our engagement was broken. I have never cared for any one since. Well, this winter when we renewed our friendship I was enjoying it. I am lonelier than you believe, Tory, with your rather hard opinion of me. But by and by, Richard—Mr. Fenton seemed to have the impression that we might ignore the passing of nearly twenty years. I thought he was mistaken and that it was wiser we should not meet often. Do you understand?"

Tory shrugged her shoulders with the little foreign gesture that she had not yet wholly lost.

"Yes; how can I fail to understand? It is just as I thought."

The silence that followed was not comfortable and Miss Frean added:

"Suppose we don't talk about ourselves, Tory. Please tell me about Kara. I am deeply interested and not so surprised as most people by her attitude toward Mr. Moore."

"Well, I am surprised and, more than that,

I am awfully annoyed with Kara. Not that it makes the slightest difference to her. You know Kara is one of the quietly firm people whom one cannot change. She must see for herself.

"She has decided to accept the fact that Mr. Moore is her guardian in the sense that her mother begged this favor of him many years ago, not otherwise. She has declined to allow him legally to adopt her. She is friendly but does not wish him to do anything for her. She says that he will not find her congenial and that as soon as she is well enough she wants to come back to the Gray House on the Hill until she has finished school. Nothing will induce her to give up the idea that she wishes to make her own living as soon as she is strong enough. In the meantime she is studying stenography whenever she has any leisure. And actually Mr. Hammond and Dr. McClain and Uncle Richard uphold her. They say they admire her spirit. Mr. Hammond has given Kara a typewriter which she was at least gracious enough to accept. She has taken nothing from poor Mr. Moore, who wants to be as nice as possible, except books and candy and flowers. She has condescended to drive with him a few times. I really think

Kara is partly obstinate because I used to tell her she would be sure to develop a romantic history. She insisted I wanted her to have a rich guardian and to grow up and marry him like the sentimental stories of girls in orphan asylums the world over. So now Kara, who might have a rich guardian, repudiates him!"

Memory Frean laughed.

"Well, I must say I too admire Kara's fortitude. And we all suffer a little from your romantic tendencies, Tory. By and by Kara will become more friendly. Naturally she is more concerned with getting well at present."

"If she does not recover in New York, Mr. Moore has spoken of taking Kara and Lance to Europe so that Lance can study music and Kara see what can be done for her. If she does not get well I don't see how she can refuse this. I believe Kara would accept anything to make her walk again, even if she insisted on earning the money in the future and returning it to Mr. Moore.

"Isn't it nearly teatime, Memory? I see several of the girls walking toward the ever-green cottage."

The arrangement had been that after a walk to the woods the Girl Scouts and their

Captain would have tea inside their cabin with Philip Winslow, the artist, who had been living there during the winter and been added as a member of the Girl Scout Council.

At this moment he and the Troop Captain were walking away from the cabin toward them.

"Tory, if you are determined upon a romance, have you ever thought there may be any deeper feeling between Mr. Winslow and Sheila than mere friendship? I know she has been very kind to him all winter, wishing to make him feel less a stranger in Westhaven."

Tory laughed.

"Thought of a romance between them? Why, Dorothy and I feel perfectly certain. Haven't you noticed not only the change in Mr. Winslow but in Sheila? Isn't she gay and charming? She never talks of being unhappy any more. Dorothy and I are so pleased and responsible. You see, we really persuaded Mr. Winslow to come to Westhaven and actually Dorothy suggested the idea of Sheila's helping him to recover from some disappointment we felt sure he had suffered. Sheila was annoyed but seems to have followed the advice."

No other conversation upon the subject

was possible, since at this moment the Troop Captain and Philip Winslow were within a few yards of Tory and Miss Frean.

"We were afraid you would forget to come to the cabin in time for our feast," Sheila Mason remarked, slipping her hand inside Miss Frean's. "There is something I want to tell you."

Tory and Philip Winslow were walking on together.

"I have had a piece of good luck, Tory. I want you to congratulate me. You have been my mascot, you see."

"Good luck? I am so glad! Dorothy and I thought it was true, but we were not sure. It is such a heavenly relief to know."

Her companion appeared puzzled and amused.

"How could you have guessed I was going to receive a prize at the National Academy exhibition this year? I had no conception of any such good fortune, myself. And what's more I have sold the picture for two thousand dollars. I believe the fates have turned and I am now in their good graces. This is all due to you and my coming to Westhaven and becoming, well, not a Girl Scout, as you once suggested, but the nearest

thing I could manage, a member of your Council."

In spite of the good news Tory made no immediate reply.

"Aren't you going to congratulate me, Tory? I thought we artists had a fellow feeling for each other! As a matter of fact, I thought we were great friends. Some day I am going to be proud of you as an artist, Tory, when your time comes."

Still Tory was reluctant and surprisingly ungracious.

"Oh, yes, I do congratulate you," she said finally with a change in manner and tone. "And it is not only because of the picture, although that is wonderful, but I realize this will help with the other thing. Not that *she* would care, but that you will feel so much more sure of yourself and your future."

If Tory was not very clear or coherent, Mr. Winslow made no pretence of not understanding her.

"Yes, Tory, I did not dare to speak to Sheila until this happened. She and I were going to tell the Girl Scouts when we had finished tea, but I am glad to tell you first and alone.

"We are to build a house near Westhaven

and for a time I am going to make pictures of this beautiful Connecticut valley. We will work together, you and I, Tory. The disappointed, dissatisfied man you met in the old New York studio not many months ago seems almost a stranger. Come, they are waiting for us."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE LAST ROUND TABLE

IN honor of Katherine Moore's farewell visit to Westhaven there was to be a special meeting of the Girl Scouts of the Round Table in Memory Frean's House in the Woods.

After all, circumstances had been more powerful than Kara. The doctors had agreed that a sea voyage and a consultation with certain eminent surgeons in Europe would be helpful. So Kara had decided to accept the kindness from a stranger who might have played so different a rôle in the last twelve years of her life, but was now deeply anxious to make amends.

In any case Mr. Moore had intended going abroad for the summer with Lance McClain. He explained that he wanted Lance's companionship, having developed a keen interest in him and wishing him to have the best possible musical education.

During the latter part of the spring—the date had not been finally settled—Mr. Moore, with Kara and Lance, was to sail for London.

The length of Kara's visit to Westhaven was to depend upon the time of departure.

It was pleasant to think of the number of invitations that the young girl, who had been in a fashion the ward of the village, had showered upon her for these few weeks before her farewell.

With something approaching relief, Kara allowed Miss Victoria Fenton to make the decision for her. She was to come directly to her brother and herself and her niece. Her other friends might see her there at any time, as their house was large and fairly quiet, when Tory permitted it to be. The downstairs bedroom, so rarely used, was at their guest's disposal. Moreover, Miss Victoria permitted herself to acknowledge that she very much wanted the pleasure of having Kara in her home. She had developed a deep interest and affection for her.

For once Tory concurred with her aunt's desire.

She was fascinated to observe Miss Victoria in her tender and thoughtful attitude toward Katherine Moore during her visit in their household and to learn her own lesson. Never had Miss Victoria outwardly displayed so

much affection, not even toward her own brother, whom she adored. They had differed with regard to his engagement many years before, and, although neither was aware of the fact, the sympathy of their relation had never been entirely restored.

Kara's practical nature, her humor and courage did not jar upon Miss Victoria, for she had been compelled by circumstances to spend her life with dreamers, who were trying to her narrow, well-ordered nature.

Moreover, she had a passion for looking after people who needed her. Kara was almost embarrassed by her kindness and her attentions until Tory confided the discovery she lately had made that her aunt required just what Kara could give her. Certainly Miss Victoria would rather have perished than confess the fact that in the past year she had suffered many qualms of jealousy over her brother's and niece's congeniality and a devotion that had left her out in the cold.

Kara had improved, but still continued to be troubled by a curious lack of sensation. She was forced to spend the greater part of her time either upon a couch or in a chair. It was difficult for Tory, who was not conspicuously unselfish; yet she had the generosity

to leave Kara and her aunt alone as often as she could decide to make the sacrifice of the few remaining hours with the girl friend whom she had cared for from the hour of their original meeting.

The Round Table was toward the close of Kara's stay in Westhaven. She was to sail early in May and must be back in New York for a week or more before the date set.

Without wavering, Kara still utterly declined to play any such fanciful rôle as a Knight of the Round Table. Notwithstanding Tory's pleading, she would not come to the final meeting of the Round Table in any other costume than her Girl Scout one. She was keenly interested in the spectacle, however, and entreated the other Girl Scouts to allow her to see how they must have looked upon the Christmas Eve entertainment six months before.

The season made a difference in the decorations. No longer ornamented with pines and evergreens, the living-room of the House in the Woods was beautiful with spring flowers and shrubs.

Against the brown walls were branches of blossoming dogwood, long sprays of the fragrant, rose-pink trailing arbutus. On the

mantel and tables were vases of white and purple lilacs and a single bowl of splendid crimson roses that had come to the House in the Woods with no card attached. The hostess understood, however, that they were a gift from Mr. Fenton.

To-night they stood in the center of the Round Table.

There was no raised dais, the Troop Captain insisting on having her place at the Round Table, which included Miss Freen.

Suspended from the rafters of the great room were the silver banners, no longer of unmarked silver cloth. Embroidered upon them in the chosen colors of the Knights were stories of their services during the past half year.

Edith Linder's was the supreme achievement! No one of the Scouts in her Troop would have dreamed of disputing this fact.

To-night she wore the Golden Eaglet badge, the highest honor awarded a Scout. The single act of devotion on the part of one girl had afforded an example to the others. The sufferers from the great factory fire had received many kindnesses and attentions from the Girl Scouts Troop of the Eagle's Wing. The little group of girls, members of a com-

paratively unknown organization in Westhaven a year and a half ago, were now accounted one of the chief factors for beauty and service in the village life.

Toward the close of this evening, Katherine Moore looked slowly from one face to the other of the friends surrounding her and then about the exquisite room, fragrant and shining with a wealth of green-and-white candles.

"To me it seems to have been a wonderful Scout winter, in spite of the fact that you told me until after Christmas you feared that you were slipping back from the enthusiasm of the early days of our Scouting. I am sorry, but I seem to be the only one of you who has done nothing. I am glad I declined to allow you to include me as a Knight of your Round Table. I should have proved neither a worthy Knight nor Scout."

Kara was so unconscious of the impression that her words were making upon the group of girls that no one of them dared reply for a moment.

Then, not one of the Scouts answered, but the Troop Captain, Sheila Mason, with the gentler, happier expression that her Troop of girls were accustomed to seeing upon her face of late.

"Perhaps, Kara, you do not recognize as we do what you have accomplished. Is it nothing to fight the good fight as you have fought it, to have kept your courage and faith and humor under such difficulties?

"The members of your Troop of Girl Scouts do not agree with you. Edith Linder is the only one of us who at present wears the Golden Eaglet badge. We have decided that *one* other girl from our Troop deserves this same token. Your record has been approved, Kara, so allow me to present you with the Golden Eaglet."

The presentation was informal. After the Troop Captain had pinned the badge to the lapel of Kara's pocket, she stooped and kissed her, her eyes suddenly filling with tears.

"We want you to wear this badge for more than one reason, Kara. If you are lonely among strangers in the days to come, think of the affection of the Girl Scouts. One or the other of us will have you in mind every hour of the day."

An hour later the Round Table discussion had closed, not alone with farewells for Kara, but with whispered suggestions of future plans.

A few moments after Kara and Tory were together outside the door of the House in the

Woods, waiting for the car that was to drive them home.

Above them in a nearly cloudless sky the moon swam, brilliant and serene.

"It was absurd of you, Kara, and so like you to suggest to-night that you were the least worthy member of our Troop of Girl Scouts. You may be a sensible and practical person, Kara, but just the same your humility was ill timed."

"Don't, please, Tory. Tease me on any other subject, but not that. I feel my own unworthiness even more deeply, and yet what could I do under the circumstances? Not to have accepted the undeserved honor would have been too ungracious! I seem to have many things bestowed upon me of late that I have no right to possess. Poor Mr. Moore and Lance! Can you imagine how bored they will be by my society?"

Tory shook her head, her eyes dark and soft in the moonlight, her lips red and trembling slightly.

"No, Kara, what you suggest is beyond even my imagination!

"Strange that you should be sailing for Europe and leaving me in Westhaven! Do you remember how we used to talk and dread

the opposite thing happening? Then I supposed I would go away and you stay on here. I am sure I should be less missed."

Kara laughed.

"No, Tory. You are the yeast in our dough. Don't you realize this? Oh, I suppose I might have thought of a prettier figure of speech for you, but not a truer one. You have wakened us all, and brought us beauty and ways of thinking and living we would not have had in Westhaven without you.

"Now for a little while we must say good-by; but wait for me here, won't you, Tory."

The girls could hear the car stopping.

An instant Kara glanced upward and then at the scene before them—the open space, the tall freshly green trees, the figure of the girl beside her, glistening and radiant from the moonlight.

"You see, Tory, it is everywhere and all about us, what you say you wish, a shining world. We have said good-night and good-by; let us slip away quietly."

CHAPTER XIX

AN UNWRITTEN STORY

TO say good-by to his family and friends before sailing for Europe, Lance McClain also came back to Westhaven for a few days' visit.

The visit was not so satisfactory as Kara's to her friends across the way, because Lance was moody and restless and not, as one would have expected, especially happy.

It may be that he was troubled over the thought of leaving his father and sister and his favorite brother, Donald; if this were true, he made no such confession.

The days were busy ones, as Lance had to be made ready for his trip of the summer and perhaps a longer time abroad, and no one in Dr. McClain's household knew just what he would require, nor how to set about getting his outfit in the least extravagant fashion.

The wardrobes of the various members of Dr. McClain's family had never played important parts in their lives. The oldest of the brothers, who had gone away to college for

two years, had passed though a brief period of fashionable airs. The others either laughing or failing to notice, and by and by settling down to a business career in Westhaven, Jonathan McClain had forgotten. The other boys, when the doctor's receipts were fair, boasted two suits a year, and borrowed and hooked one another's choicest possessions upon special occasions.

Dorothy, as the only daughter, might have had greater indulgences. Every now and then Dr. McClain regarded her half wistfully and half critically, begging her to tell him if she was as well looked after as the other girls who were her friends and had mothers. Dorothy used only to laugh at him and insist that she possessed everything in the world she required, promising to inform him the instant she found herself in need. The truth was that Dorothy, with her half-boyish attitude toward life, so far had given little consideration to the question of her own costumes.

Of the girls in her Patrol, only Teresa Peterson was really intensely interested in the subject up to the present time, although several of the other girls showed unmistakable signs of increasing concern.

Now with the problem of Lance to be imme-

diately solved, Dorothy wished she had developed more feminine knowledge and taste, at least where her brothers were concerned.

Mr. Moore, Lance's friend, and in some measure Kara's guardian, although she had not agreed to legal adoption, had offered to supply him with whatever might be missing from his present outfit. This Dr. McClain utterly refused to consider. Trying enough to his pride and sense of responsibility to permit Lance's other expenses to be paid by almost a complete stranger! In the face of Lance's impassioned desire and pleading he could not refuse, but certainly the boy should not start off like a pauper!

What made conditions more difficult for Dorothy and the elderly housekeeper was, that having delivered this ultimatum, neither the Doctor nor Lance appeared to have any further concern in the matter. All they did was to drive around together, not talking a great deal, Lance simply sitting quietly with his father and waiting for him in the ancient automobile when he disappeared to make his daily calls.

On the afternoon before Lance was to return to New York Dorothy was complaining of this difficulty before a group of intimate friends

upon the back veranda of the old Fenton house.

Hand in hand, like a little girl and boy, Lance and Dorothy had run across the street to say farewell to Tory and Kara, as Lance was to go back to town a little earlier than his traveling companion.

Ten minutes after their arrival, Don had followed, not wishing to be left out.

They had drifted out upon the back porch after drinking hot chocolate in the dining-room and eating one of Sarah's cakes, especially baked for the farewell feast.

The spring afternoon was chilly and the back garden looked slightly forbidding. The grass was only faintly green, Miss Victoria's favorite shrubs were still wrapped in straw and the birds in the old fruit trees appeared to have no animation save to seek shelter.

Comfortably clad in coats and overcoats, the little group on the porch revealed no such lack of spirit.

Kara was in her usual chair, Tory on a cushion beside her. Dorothy sat on the porch railing, Lance near her and Don standing a few feet away.

Five minutes before they had other guests: three Boy Scouts in Lance's and Don's Patrol.

Having said their good-bys, they had marched off together, glad the always painful duty was over.

"I trust Lance won't prove a disgrace to you and Mr. Moore, Kara," Dorothy continued. "He and father have solemnly promised me to purchase his going-away suit and overcoat the day before he sails. You know father will be in New York to see you both off. At times I feel I would like to be with him, and then again I don't trust myself."

Tory Drew gazed thoughtfully from one of her friends to the other, omitting no one of them. She saw Kara pale and wistful and more than a little frightened over the strange journey ahead of her with her almost unknown friend and Lance. She saw Lance troubled at parting with the dearest members of his family, yet tense with dreams, sorry to be going and eager to set off. She saw Don puzzled and annoyed by Lance and nevertheless proud of him, for Don did not approve of Lance's accepting Mr. Moore's kindness. Too much it would have hurt his own self-respect. He did not believe Lance should leave his ~~father~~ father, knowing how much his father cared for him beyond his other sons. He simply could not understand that, although

Lance could see these things in a measure as he did, he cared more for his music. Nor could Don appreciate that Lance had the artist's idea that once he succeeded he could more than repay all he had accepted.

The sight of Don's face touched Tory and gave her a sensation of warm championship she never felt for his more gifted brother. Don looked so strong and good-natured and steadfast.

At the last Tory's eyes caught Dorothy's glance.

"Think it much wiser for us to remain in Westhaven, Dorothy dear, and have no tragic farewells! Kara insists she won't have me in New York at the last."

Kara smiled.

"I don't think you need worry over Lance in relation to Mr. Moore or me, Dorothy," Kara returned. "I am the outsider in the group. They are already great friends and must know each other's peculiarities. Besides, Lance is sure to make Mr. Moore proud of him, and the rest of us as well. Fortunately for me, I shall not have to interfere seriously with their plans. Mr. Moore has promised to place me in a sanitarium and then to forget all about me for a time."

Lance crossed over to the girl's chair.

They had never been especial friends. In fact, Lance had been a little embarrassed by Kara's humor and practical good sense. He had not cared for any girl as he did his sister Dorothy and, next to Dorothy, her two friends, Tory Drew and Louise Miller. But now he and Kara were to be thrown into an unusual and unexpected intimacy. Moreover, Kara's present trouble appealed to Lance's latent chivalry. He was not possessed of this characteristic in the same degree as Don. Lance had had too much care taken of him in the past. Nevertheless, he was moved by Kara's last speech.

"We shall not leave you anywhere and forget you, Kara. Mr. Moore thinks of you more than you dream and would do anything in his power to make up to you for the lost years."

This time Kara shook her head.

"They were not *lost* years, not for me, Lance, and assuredly not for Mr. Moore. I have told all of you a dozen times that I would rather have been brought up in the orphan asylum which I choose to call by the dear old title of the 'Gray House on the Hill' than as the ward of Mr. Moore. I am not

ungrateful to him, but how would I then have known Tory and Dorothy and you and Don and Miss Victoria and all my other friends in Westhaven?"

Lance appeared honestly puzzled.

He could not help believing Kara. She gave one the impression of absolute sincerity, yet it was difficult for him to accept her point of view. He would like to have had the advantages that undoubtedly would have been Kara's had she occupied the position Mr. Moore would have given her.

"Never mind, Kara. What I meant was that you can always count upon me at any time or under any circumstances. If we should be separated in Europe, all that will ever be necessary is for you to let me know you want me. I will come to you no matter how long we stay over on the other side."

Dorothy slipped down from her perch.

"Don't be tiresome, Lance. You talk as if you and Kara would be away years rather than months!" She looked worried and irritated.

Apparently Lance had not heard.

He was standing close beside Donald and had thrown one arm about his shoulder.

This was once a favorite attitude between

the twin brothers, Tory recalled. They had become less intimate, and this afternoon before Lance's departure were both aware of the fact and regretting it. As usual, expression came more easily to Lance.

"You will look after Dorothy and Tory and Louise and the best beloved of the Girl Scouts whenever they need help, Don. This goes without saying, so it is only fair I should try to be useful to Kara once in a while.

"You are reconciled to my going, aren't you, Don?"

"Wouldn't make any difference whether I was or not," Don answered ungraciously, yet his blue eyes softened.

The dusk was descending and Lance's final speech to Kara had added to Dorothy's restlessness and discomfort.

"It is time we were saying good-night, Lance; you will wish to tell Tory good-by."

The boy crossed over and held out his long-fingered, slender hand.

As Tory's own fingers closed over it, she had a sensation of being ashamed of an emotion and of hoping Lance would not guess. She was not so sorry at his departure as she had thought she would be. Life would be more peaceful and agreeable at the old McClain

house with Lance away, even if more humdrum. She would have more of Dorothy's and Don's society for herself.

"I do hope you will have great success, Lance, and be a celebrated musician some day," she said with all the cordiality she honestly felt in this connection.

It was the suggestion that always humbled Lance.

"I am afraid that will never be, Tory, but thank you just the same. I suppose you can't say you are sorry I am going away."

Lance's expression was the quizzical one that the girl often found annoying. He appeared hurt as well this afternoon.

"Of course I am sorry in a way, Lance," she answered truthfully enough. "But realizing how you want to go yourself, isn't it asking a great deal to have us feel all the regret? Don't forget us and Westhaven while you are gone. Long ago father and I decided never to say good-bye to any one, so good-night and good luck."

CHAPTER XX

A WEDDING

AFTER the sailing of Kara and Lance, Tory Drew and Dorothy McClain would have been in truth lonely and depressed save for an approaching event which promised the keenest pleasure and excitement.

After announcing their engagement, Sheila Mason and Philip Winslow could find no adequate reason why they should go through the strain and uncertainties of a long engagement. They therefore concluded to be married early in the coming June.

The only two persons who might have objected, Sheila's mother and father, expressed themselves as well pleased. The years Sheila had passed mourning for her soldier lover were now over and they were more than glad to find her happiness restored. The old Sheila had returned with an added sweetness and depth to her nature.

Another point in hurrying on the ceremony was the fact that the Girl Scouts might wish to return to their own evergreen cabin in

Beechwood Forest. They were to build a new house that was to be half studio and half home, along the shores of the Connecticut River, and wished during the summer months to see it completed.

The house was to be a gift from Sheila's parents, who had invited the bride and groom to be with them until the house was finished.

"There is only one thing that makes me object seriously to your marriage, Sheila," Tory said one afternoon, speaking in her usual impulsive and unexpected fashion.

"Sorry, Tory! What is this *one* thing, by the way?" the Troop Captain inquired.

She was seated on the small step outside the evergreen cabin on an early May afternoon, her own Patrol of Girl Scouts surrounding her. Two or three of the girls had wandered off toward the woods.

Mr. Winslow had gone to New York for the day. The Scouts had been having their regular meeting at the cabin during his absence. There was a bare possibility he might return before they went back to the village.

"My *one* fear," said Tory, "is you may consider that being married will interfere with your duties as a Scout Captain. If this is

true, I shall oppose the wedding as much as I have encouraged it in the past."

The girls laughed. The Troop Captain did not laugh, so that Tory reached out and caught her hand with a little appeal for pardon.

"Do you know, girls, I don't take Tory's impertinent speech in the fashion that it deserves because I have been thinking of just what her words imply. Perhaps after I am married I had best resign as your Troop Captain. In that case you would let me become a member of your Council?"

"Good gracious, no!" Margaret Hale announced decisively. "Yes, I do mean what I said, and I altogether agree with Tory Drew. If you are even contemplating ceasing to be our Captain I intend to call a secret, special meeting of your Girl Scouts to see what we can do to persuade you to change your mind in two connections: one with regard to marrying Mr. Winslow, the other with regard to deserting your Troop."

"Moreover, we shall all utterly decline to be bridesmaids or to permit you to have a Scout wedding," Joan Peters interrupted.

Teresa drew closer to the Troop Captain.

"Promise you will never give up your Scouts, not for years and years. By that time

we shall all be marrying too, so that it will not matter."

The laughter following Teresa's little speech was not so spontaneous as usual. Tory Drew, Louise Miller and Dorothy McClain shook their heads emphatically.

"That day will never come, not for us!" they announced in chorus.

Tory arose.

The afternoon was not especially warm and she had slipped on a green coat over her Scout costume. Her red-gold hair was uncovered.

"You have *not* given us your promise yet, Sheila. Formally and in the name of your Scout Troop of the Eagle's Wing I ask you to continue to be our Captain until circumstances make it impossible that you give us even a measure of your time. No one has appointed me the official spokesman, but any one who wishes may disagree with me.

"In my humble opinion, you have been the best possible Captain any group of girls have ever had the good luck to possess. You have been always one of us, and yet wiser and more just, the dearest kind of a friend and leader."

"Bravo, Tory!" half a dozen of the other

girls murmured, with a subdued clapping of hands.

Suddenly they became silent. Sheila Mason had not replied, but instead had covered her face with her two hands.

An instant later, when Teresa lifted them gently down, the girls were aware that her eyes had filled with tears.

"I shall continue your Troop Captain as long as you want me. No one and nothing shall interfere," she began brokenly, with a little catch in her clear voice.

"You girls realize I never have believed that I have been able to accomplish half as much for my Girl Scouts as you have for me. You see, Tory even induced Mr. Winslow to come to live in Westhaven. It occurred to me that my marriage might offer you an opportunity to secure some one you would prefer without wounding my feelings."

She leaned forward.

"Suppose we talk now of the wedding, if you girls will agree to remove your opposition. It is wonderful to have your interest and sympathy! I am to have eight Girl Scout bridesmaids. As Kara is not here to take her place as a member of our first Patrol, Martha Greaves will be one of us. What I wanted to

ask is: has any one of you thought of a costume for the bridesmaids on this great occasion?"

Teresa sighed.

"Have we thought of anything else except our costumes? Why, as soon as I heard you announce your engagement, almost the next minute, before I knew you dreamed of asking us to play any part in the ceremony, I began considering what I would like to wear."

"You mean you thought of yourself and your clothes, Teresa Peterson, and not of Miss Mason's happiness?" Louise Miller demanded, annoyed as she so often was by Teresa's frivolity and personal vanity.

"Oh, of course," Teresa answered. Then aware of the slightly amused and critical atmosphere to which she was accustomed, she added in an aggrieved fashion: "Of course I wanted Sheila to be happy, but then I knew she would be. I thought of *her* wedding dress as well."

With a gentleness in her manner suggesting sympathy, Miss Mason put her arm about Teresa. She was especially fond of the girl, of her soft, dusky beauty, of her childish, pleasure-loving nature. She was now and then a little afraid that Teresa might not

always choose the right path in spite of her Girl Scout associations. For, although the other girls were fond of her, with one or two exceptions, no one of them approved or admired her character or made of her an intimate friend. She received scant praise or understanding in her own home. Her parents were plain people who had grown wealthy, but had made few changes in their method of living. Their home was large but filled with ugly, almost vulgar furniture which hurt Teresa's finer sensibilities without her appreciating the reason. They had a number of younger children and kept no one to help. Steadfastly, in her own indolent fashion, Teresa had rebelled against the aid she was called upon to give. As a member of the Girl Scouts, she had displayed a little keener interest, but the Troop Captain realized how intensely Teresa disliked the noise and quarreling and discomfort of her surroundings. Teresa was not intellectual, she was not energetic or resourceful; yet she often announced that she wished to get away from home as soon as possible without any idea of how this was to be accomplished. Certainly she had no thought of learning to support herself as Louise Miller and Edith Linder were intending to do.

"I see nothing so reprehensible in Teresa's remarks," Miss Mason interposed reproachfully. "Of course, she must have known I should want you girls to be my bridesmaids. Well, since you are so formal, has any one thought of a pretty costume since my invitation? Tory, you are our artist. Have you an idea to suggest that is the least bit original? Of course no other wedding could ever have been what mine will be, and yet there have been other June weddings."

Tory flushed and laughed.

"I am a worse offender than Teresa. She has confessed; I have not, and yet I behaved just as she did. I too thought of our bridesmaids' costumes the afternoon of the engagement. Remember, we were spending the afternoon here in the cabin and the beechwoods were beginning to turn faintly green and gold.

"I dreamed then of a green-and-gold wedding. Our dresses and hats to be of pale green, with wreaths of deeper green and bronze leaves. In our hands we could carry little branches of beech leaves from our own forest, with golden roses."

"Then, Sheila in white would be like summer approaching in white mist." Teresa

announced. An original flight of fancy was unusual for her.

"I think your idea is lovely, Tory, and it is unique. Suppose we talk it over again," Miss Mason answered.

"It is late. We must not stay longer; we have a long walk back to the village."

"I thought you wished to see Mr. Winslow before we returned and that we were waiting for him," Dorothy McClain remarked in her direct fashion.

The Troop Captain shook her head.

"No—yes—well, of course I should like to see him, but not to the extent of keeping you girls out of doors later than we should stay.

"Suppose we pack up our possessions and move in regular marching order. We shall arrive the sooner."

A half mile away a tall masculine figure joined the little procession. Side by side with the Troop Captain he led the way back to Westhaven.

CHAPTER XXI

A JUNE DAY

TO invite every individual in the village to the marriage of the Girl Scout Troop Captain and Mr. Winslow was not possible, and yet there were moments when Mrs. Mason insisted that this appeared to be her daughter's idea.

On a June morning at an old stone church in Westhaven, set in a wide churchyard filled with ancient elm trees, the wedding was to take place.

Upon the day, shortly before the hour set for the ceremony, the Girl Scout Troop of the Eagle's Wing, save the original Patrol, who were to act as bridesmaids, entered the church. They were seated in the pews toward the front, just behind the family, that had been set aside especially for them. In less than two years the number of Girl Scouts in Westhaven had increased to half a dozen patrols.

Not long after, the Boy Scouts of the village followed.

Dressed in their uniforms, later, when the

other wedding guests had assembled, the Scouts formed a conspicuous note of golden brown color amid the lighter muslins and silks of the women and girls and the darker clothes of the men.

Ignoring the old difficulties which had so long separated them, Memory Frean came to the wedding accompanied by Miss Victoria Fenton and Mr. Richard Fenton. She looked very handsome in a dark-blue chiffon made over a darker shade of red and with a bunch of red roses at her waist.

Mr. and Mrs. Jeremy Hammond motored down from their country place, bringing Lucy with them. More than ever the little girl looked like a gorgeous butterfly in a beautiful yellow silk gown, her white leghorn hat trimmed in a wreath of golden poppies.

Half a dozen children from the Gray House on the Hill, who had been Sheila Mason's special friends among the younger group whom Katherine Moore had once loved and mothered, were also invited.

As a special favor, "Billy Do," of former days, was asked to sit beside his once-adored little girl friend, "Lucy Don't."

A shy little boy, thin and freckled, Billy had greatly altered in the past two years. Not the

slightest interest did he display in Lucy, who treated him with unexpected friendliness.

She seemed hurt and puzzled until the ceremony began and then, girl-like, forgot everything and everybody in the intensity of her excitement.

Sheila Mason was a typical June bride, fair and sweet, with a dress of pure white silk covered with a long tulle veil, and her arms filled with white roses.

The eight bridesmaids had adopted Tory Drew's suggestion. Their dresses shaded from palest green to bronze, every tint of the beech leaf from spring to autumn. Made of tarleton, with several skirts, the uppermost one of green, the sashes and hats were of bronze. They might have been spirits from Beechwood Forest save for their very human interest in themselves, the ceremony, and the great church crowded with their own and Sheila Mason's friends.

Save for a dozen old-time acquaintances who had come up from New York, Mr. Winslow had invited no one. He had no family save a sister, who had married and lived too far away to be present.

As Tory, with flushed cheeks and wide, dark eyes, listened to the ever-impressive

words of the wedding ceremony, which she actually was hearing read in church for the first time in her life, she stared with amazed wonder at her artist friend. Was this the disappointed, half-embittered man she had met in New York City only a few brief months before? For the first time Tory was brought face to face with the change that happiness can bring to a human life.

Two hours later Tory Drew and Dorothy McClain found themselves seated side by side upon a divan in the corner of the drawing-room of Mr. and Mrs. Mason's home.

The bride and groom had departed; only a few guests were still lingering, the intimate friends of the host and hostess.

The girls appeared weary and dispirited.

Dorothy put out her hand and touched the golden roses in the other girl's lap.

"There is something a little depressing about a wedding, isn't there? I wonder why? I was cheerful and happy enough this morning. I suppose it is because things are now over and Sheila and Mr. Winslow no longer here."

She appeared uncommonly grave.

"Suppose we make a compact with each other, Tory, to keep the promise we made the other day, you, Louise, and I, never to marry."

Laughing, Tory Drew shook her head.

She had removed her hat, and her hair was a beautiful bright red-gold rising above the pale green of her gown, the stem to some radiant, gayly-colored flower.

"I don't consider it wise to make rash compacts. We will keep our word only if we really wish. But whatever fate overtakes us, remember 'I am the master of my fate, I am the Captain of my soul.'"

"Now suppose we gather up our possessions, say good-by and start for home."

THE END

